



Cult of the Sacred Runes

Chapters 041 - 080

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Chapter 41 – The Ichor Palm

Ye Zheng Qing was shocked to see three green scrolls in the Du Patriarch's hand. The Du family was resourceful, but a medium grade mystic scrolls were super rare, and not something one could acquire through wealth!

A Myst stance was inscribed on each of the scrolls which activates when one tears the scroll.

Mystic Arms and scrolls both have their pros and cons.

The scrolls are relatively cheaper and their activation require no Qi, but the downside is that they are one-use artifacts. Once torn and activated they were useless, and only a fraction of the inscribed stance's power would be released compared to a Mystic Arm.

The arms were reusable, and activated by Qi they would release the full potential of the stance stored in them as long as the Qi of the user lasted. Their price and rarity were their drawbacks, together with the fact that they don't work when the user runs out of Qi, unlike scrolls.

Having said that, both medium grade arms and scrolls were very rare, and people who possess them usually prefer to keep them.

“The person backing us gave me these three scrolls though I never thought I'd have to use them. You should be proud of yourself for putting me in this situation!” Du Yuan Ming sneered.

Both Zhou Wu and Dong Ho were jealous of the Du Patriarch. They kept a healthy relationship with Lu Feng but had never received any gifts like the patriarch did.

Lu Feng was strong but he was not capable of inscribing medium grade scrolls. These three scroll were made by nobody other than his master, Master Mu, himself.

“Du Yuan Ming, none of us are afraid of dying for the family!” Ye Zheng Qing turned around, energized by the courageous faces of his kins and said to the Du Patriarch. “We are all in! Maybe we won’t make it through today, but your family will not walk out of this arena the way you came in, if you walk out at all!”

Ye Zheng Qing stared at the Du camp as he furiously injected Qi into the bone bracelet.

The bracelet rattled and hummed! It radiated a blurry but bright green burst of light as the runes carved on the bone fragments twitched. The runes were then projected onto the green blurry light sphere. They transformed it into the shape of an enormous bird, and a big burst of energy exploded from the artifact!

The bird’s call was proportional to the size of the creature. It spreaded its wings and flew towards the Du camp.

“No!” Du Yuan Ming started panicking, “I will deal with Ye Zheng Qing while you two wipe out the rest of them!” He said to Zhou Wu and Dong Ho as he torn up one of the scrolls. A thick vine shot out of the broken

scroll and lashed towards the large green bird. The bird was tangled and slowed moments after.

The destruction of two condensed prime Warriors armed with Mystic Arms and scrolls was life threatening, and because of this the audience started running away in panic as the scale of this fight escalated quickly.

“Boom!”

Although tangled in vines, the green bird’s attack was not stopped. It opened its beak and spat out a scorching pillar of flame. This incinerated a few of the Du youngsters who were too slow to react, and their chilling cries slowly faded in the sea of fire.

“Damn it!” Du Yuan Ming’s expression was twisted. With the impeccable speed of a seven star condensed prime Warrior he traveled to the Ye side of the arena in a blink of an eye. He was levitating over the Ye youngsters with a long sequence of glowing runes already on his fingertip.

Together with this stance he tore up the second scroll. This summoned balls of fire that rained down onto the large green bird. They left long trails of fire which resembled colossal comets breaking through the atmosphere.

It took two medium grade scrolls on top of a Qi shield to finally stop the the vigorous attack of the green bird. But Du Ming Yue’s rage had not subsided because of the casualties they suffered he was not going to just let this go. “Do it!”

Zhou Wu and Dong Ho chuckled as they charged towards the Ye camp. The general's hand spread open, and it was as big as a hand fan. He extended his arm and reached towards Ye Wei.

“Don’t touch my nephew!” Ye Hai shouted then channeled his Qi striking out with his palm.

“You are not in my league!” Zhou Wu laughed and punched Ye Hai’s palm with his other hand. Ye Hai’s arm immediately shattered upon contact. Ye Hai was overpowered by the crushing momentum, he spat out blood and fell to the ground.

There were cruel smiles on both the general and president’s faces as Ye Hai was thrown back.

“You guys are rubbish! Is there anyone here who can fight? I am getting bored! If you’re not going to fight back I will just end your miserable lives and send you lot to meet your ancestors!” Zhou Wu quickly wrote a rune sequence with each of his hands.

“Buzz!”

Driven by Qi, the runes started rattling. The runes transformed into twenty blood red palms, each of them was ten meters long and emanated vile Qi out of the grooves and palm lines. They were just like the gigantic hands of a demon.

Myst stance, Ichor Palms!

“Bang!”

The red palms were still materializing, but they were already emitting petrifying pressure waves that knocked all the Ye youngsters including Ye Wei onto the ground. They were pressed against the floor looking pale and defenseless.

“Crack!”

The commanding power of Zhou Wu was menacing! Before actually attacking, the red palms were just hovered in the air, but Ye Wei’s joints were starting to crack as if they were about to be shattered. The pressure waves mercilessly pushed against him causing him to bleed internally and spit out more blood.

“Little Wei!” Ye Zhong clumsily stepped to Ye Wei’s side. He turned his head to his little cousin and shouted with a broken voice after seeing his precious partner’s condition. “Over my dead body!”

“And my tiger!” Ye Zhong forced his Sentient and dantian dry with the last bit of his will-force and Qi he forced himself to perform White Tiger’s Assault. There was only one thought in his mind, he had to protect Ye Wei.

“Roar!”

The mighty beast appeared. It growled and immediately lunged at the falling red palm over Ye Wei’s body. The tiger and Ye Zhong shared a ferocious and determined look.

“This is hilarious. You are still just an ordinary Warrior! What are you thinking?” Zhou Wu laughed hysterically then slammed his hand down, and the red palm dropped down with great momentum.

“Bang!”

The white tiger was shattered by the red palm immediately.

They were both Myst stances, but Zhou Wu had decades of training before Ye Zhong was even born. The seven star condensed prime Warrior’s stance broke White Tiger’s Assault upon contact.

“Little Wei, I’m sorry...” Ye Zhong lost consciousness as the tiger was shattered, and his Sentient was fractured.

“Cousin Zhong!” Ye Wei screamed his lungs out as tears were flowing out of his bloodshot eyes. His Sentient too began to fray.

A golden flash emerged in Ye Wei’s Sentient empowering his body so it stayed rigid under the immense pressure.

One by one the Ye’s dropped to the ground with blood coming from their mouths. Ye Wei was standing but his consciousness was fading.

“A Student and still on your feet? Admirable!” Zhou Wu grunted and channeled more Qi, ten more red palms struck towards Ye Wei with even stronger force.

Chapter 42 – Master Yi

“No!” Ye Wei’s eyes were bloodshot as he looked around him. He grunted in agony as he was saddened by his fallen brothers and sisters bathed in blood.

As the red palms approached Ye Wei, the spine-chilling force intensified exponentially. His bones started to crack and his wounded body couldn’t stop bleeding, even his Sentient which was protected by the golden light was starting to rupture. His whole body was on the edge of breaking.

The pain Ye Wei suffered from his tearing Sentient was ten times greater than his body was enduring; the pain was striking his soul. However strong Ye Wei’s mind was, there was no way he could stay conscious for much longer.

Suffering from critical haemorrhaging, his blood started coming out of the pores on Ye Wei’s skin. He was no longer conscious, but his body was somehow still standing straight!

“Buzz!”

Just as Ye Wei lost consciousness, the mystic mountain appeared in Ye Wei’s Sentient, and the golden light started repairing and patching up the cracks.

Some of the energy even escaped his Sentient and rushed throughout the rest of his body, into his blood, muscles, and bones. This energy

silently nourished Ye Wei's body causing it to repair and even strengthen itself at an incredible rate! Bathing in this energy, his body would have the strength of a four star Student in mere minutes.

What Ye Wei was experiencing sped up his cultivation enormously. He was catching up to the naturally gifted children his age, but his life is now at risk. It was at the mercy of his luck and the gigantic red palms shown no sign of stopping!

“Little Wei!”

Ye Zheng Qing looked at his grandson in despair. Hoping it was not too late, he hastily injected his Qi into the bone bracelet.

The large green bird in the sky shook and broke through the vines with a couple wing strikes then it flew towards Ye Wei immediately after it got free.

The patriarch's bracelet was actually a six star medium grade Mystic Arm. The stance within was powerful enough to threaten even a seven star Warrior. However, the distance between him and Ye Wei was far, despite the effort the red palms made contact with Ye Wei.

“No!” Ye Zheng Qing's vocal cord was close to tearing. His cry echoed throughout the arena; it was the only sound that could be heard.

Zhou Wu was extremely excited, his lips curved upwards showing a sadistic smile. It has been too long since he last saw a bloodbath. He had been picturing himself drawing blood since the fight broke out.

“Who dares hurt my apprentice?!” An angry voice came out of nowhere loud as thunder. It staggered everyone in the arena. The cry was powerful as a force of nature.

Before the voice faded, a sequence of some three-hundred runes appeared in the skyline and merged together instantly radiating a blinding light. They formed thirty golden fists with unproportionally large knuckles, filling the sky.

This mighty presence made everyone at the arena think that a god had arrived it seemed as if the sky itself was pressing down onto them.

The condensed prime Warriors were the only ones who had an idea of what was happening. The Du Patriarch and general Zhou were two of the strongest men in Green Moon City, but they were shivering under this pressure like everyone else.

Rays of golden light from the fists shone onto the red palms and subsequently dissolved them in an instant right above the Ye camp.

“Swish!”

The golden fists dropped from the sky like a rain of comets. They accelerated towards Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho. These fists connected with the three in a flash, and their chests took most of the hits. All three were sent flying and spinning like a kite with its string cut.

Their ribcages were broken, and they simultaneously spat blood

turning pale. The three were put into a life threatening situation from their commanding positions in a mere moment.

While the Du Patriarch was flying he saw a blue shape far far away through his dilated pupils. It was a square object that resembled a tiny temple. He suddenly realised it was the runicle he saw earlier, and his heart sank in fear and panic.

What kind of monster could injure three condensed prime Warriors from a mile away? Nobody at the scene knew that this kind of power existed.

Half a minute passed as the blue runicle drew closer. It came to a stop right by the destroyed arena.

The door slid open, and a ragged-clothed old man with shaggy hair walked out of the runicle. The sky went dark the moment this vulgar figure stepped his foot onto the arena. Master Yi had arrived!

There was a golden glow in Master Yi's eyes, his levitating body emanated a force field that covered the whole arena and caused the air around him to ripple.

He scanned the arena with his golden eyes, and his calm stare was penetrating. People at the arena were intimidated by his pressure and trembled uncontrollably.

“Master Yi!” Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho were as pale as ghosts, and they looked at the Runemaster in fear. They couldn't believe

what just happened.

General Zhou and President Dong stared at the Du Patriarch resentfully, and regretted helping him. Never in their wildest dreams did they think they would anger Master Yi because of it.

“I am Zhou Wu!”

“I am Dong Ho!”

“Greetings Master Yi!” The two said in unison. Being nice to the Runemaster was more important than the pain they were suffering and their regret. They bowed down before Master Yi while grinding their teeth.

Master Yi was always in his own world, and this was the first social interaction he had for a while. If it wasn’t for Ye Wei he would be at home studying and researching runes and stances.

“Greetings Master Yi, my name is Du Yuan Ming!” The patriarch knew he was in trouble as Master Yi never got himself involved in family disputes and from the Runemaster’s behavior he could tell the Ye family was protected. Du Yuan Ming had temporarily forgotten about the deal with Lu Feng, and he was just focused on how to survive Master Yi’s wrath.

The Du Patriarch’s status meant nothing in front of this sociopath. Not only was Master Yi an individual with immeasurable strength, he was also someone who was worshipped. If he started a fight and somehow

needed help, he would get it.

“Master Yi!” The audience too bowed to the Runemaster. For many of them it was an honor seeing his face, and some of them just wanted to leave a good impression on the most powerful man in Green Moon City. Surely some of the audience’s grandchildren would hear about the story of this encounter.

Master Yi looked less than ordinary, his appearance did not reflect his achievements at all. Du Yuan Ming was surprised that the powerful golden fist stance came from someone who looked like this.

The Du Patriarch was going to mention his relationship with Master Mu in hopes that it would gain Master Yi’s respect. But after experiencing Master Yi’s power first hand, he realized Master Yi was on a completely different realm than the second most famous Runemaster in Green Moon City, and there would be no point in dropping Master Mu’s name.

“Master Yi please don’t be angry. We did not know the Ye family was affiliated with you. We are really sorry!” Zhou Wu broke silence and begged Master Yi for forgiveness with a trembling voice as his legs went soft.

Dong Ho too was scared of the consequences. His white lips were twitching as he tried to talk himself out of trouble. “I have no idea what the Du family is trying to get me and the general into. They invited us without telling us any details!” He cowardly shouldered the responsibility and the blame on the Du family.

Master Yi grunted. He did not look at anyone in the Du camp as he headed straight to the Ye camp after hearing the excuses, more specifically towards Ye Wei.

He turned his head around and casually gazed at Zhou Wu and Dong Ho. Not only did this scare them, but their chests were hammered by Master Yi's invisible strike and they coughed and choked on their own blood.

Chapter 43 – Rain

“I am the Ye Patriarch. Greetings Master Yi!” Ye Zheng Qing slowly walked towards their savior, and gave the traditional two hand greeting, palm against fist, as he spoke nervously.

“Hey!” Master Yi’s face was emotionless. He stopped walking to nod at Ye Zheng Qing, who was flattered by the small acknowledgment from the fabled figure.

Even though the exchange was brief, Ye Zheng Qing was really proud of the fact that the Runemaster responded because Master Yi ignored the three leaders of the Du camp when they greeted him. When his status and more importantly his cultivation was pretty far behind them, only at three star condensed prime stage, he still gave Ye Zheng Qing face.

“Master Yi...” Ye Zheng Qing looked at the Runemaster’s back. He was excited but shortly after, he frowned in confusion when he realized Master Yi was only nice to him because he was related to Ye Wei. Who told the family he did not make it through the entrance exam? ‘If that was the case why is he here!?’

The Ye Patriarch stood still both grateful for and confused by Master Yi’s intervention. He just hoped it was not too late for Ye Wei and the youngsters. If not then this experience will strengthen them more than it would scar them.

“Ye Wei!” Lin Zi Yan nervously ran out of the runicle once the situation was stabilized by Master Yi. Her ink black pupils became bright purple

the moment he saw Ye Wei's damaged body in the middle of fallen Ye youngsters.

An invisible wave of energy was emitted by her as her eyes turned purple, it swept the arena like a breeze. The tulip on her robe was flowing in the wind and the air around her began to freeze.

“Girl!” Master Yi felt the fall in temperature. His face twitched, and he turned around to Lin Zi Yan. It was apparent that he was concerned about what she might do when he saw the color of her pupils.

“Ye Wei is fine!” Master Yi shouted anxiously, desperately trying to calm Lin Zi Yan’s anger. He knew what she was capable of doing in a frenzy. She was just a Warrior, but she was one from *that* family. Justice is one thing, but a massacre is another matter entirely. Master Yi ran over to Zi Yan then held her by his side, calming her down. Her eyes gradually returned to their normal state; she was reassured but still breathed a bit quicker than normal.

Master Yi then scanned around himself, assessing the injuries the Ye camp sustained. Most of the youngsters were critically injured by Du Yuan Ming and were in need of immediate medical attention.

‘Oh Ye Wei, you reckless child!’ Master Yi looked at Ye Wei, who though covered in blood and unconscious, was still on his feet. His eyes were still glimmering. ‘Stubborn and strong willed, this one will go far if he stays out of trouble!’ He was glad he made it in time. He was very close to having a big regret that would have haunted him for the rest of his life.

Wasting no more time, Master Yi with a grave look on his face rapidly

drew a sequence of three hundred and sixty-six runes with both of his hands, and immediately injected his dense Qi into them.

Master Yi's Qi circulated through the sequence and shook the runes. The illuminating runes then transformed into a large cloud of green fog that shrouded the Ye camp.

The cloud condensed into drops of green rain which nourished the injured youngsters. The visible wounds were quickly healing at an abnormal speed under the moisturization of the glowing raindrops.

Forbidden level Myst stance, Green Mizzle.

Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho were all able to identify this stance; they were all shocked and envious.

The Green Mizzle was a rare and miraculous stance Master Yi was rumored to possess. It had the power to heal and rejuvenate human bodies to a fresh and healthy condition as long as they were still breathing.

Lives of Warriors were not calm or comfortable. They were bound to accumulate injuries over time from fighting demons, beasts, and, sadly, even themselves. Many times they would even have to tap their will-force reserve dry, fighting for their lives at the cost of damaging their Sentients. Sentients were such that they could not be repaired or recovered from rest and ordinary medication.

Suffice it to say no condensed prime Warriors got to where they were

without battling hundreds of beasts and demons, injuring their bodies and sometimes even their Sentients. The good news for the Ye's was that the Green Mizzle stance could reverse these injuries, at a cost of the user's health. Even the strongest man in Green Moon City can not escape its cost. Even Master Yi could not use this forbidden stance too often.

The last time Master Yi used this stance was some eighteen years ago when a massive beast horde laid siege to Green Moon City. Eight generals of Green Moon City were gravely injured when they defended the city. The beasts were eliminated by their valiant efforts, but their injuries did not go away, and their conditions actually worsened during their five years of rehabilitation and rest. Not only were their bodies not recovering, but their cultivation was also starting to show signs of regression.

In desperation to restore the city's defense, the city lord offered Master Yi a million silver in exchange to use the Green Mizzle stance on the injured generals. The stance worked miracles, and the eight generals went back to the line of duty as stronger men.

A million silvers! The Du camp was jealous because it was not them receiving this treatment. They were also scared for their future because it showed how much Master Yi cared for the family they just mercilessly violated.

Having said that, Master Yi did not do it for the money eight years ago; he did it out of respect. The eight generals gave their all and got injured fighting armies of beasts! He would have done it for free. The ten star Runemaster was living self-sustainably, he did not care about wealth nor living a life of luxury.

‘Du Yuan Ming you idiot! You and your stupid reports! How could you miss this!? Who is going to deal with Master Yi?’ General Zhou panicked.

‘If the city lord hears about this, I will certainly lose my position!’

The general was anxious. He looked at the Du Patriarch with a pernicious stare and quietly swore and cursed. Unlike Du Yuan Ming, he did not have a good network, and it would be hard for him to keep his job if the city lord knows he had bad blood with Master Yi. The Du family was connected to Master Mu’s legacy apprentice Lu Feng, who might be able to help them rebuild their reputation in Green Moon City.

Dong Ho was even more concerned about his future. In the business world, public relations and reputation was everything. If people spread the word about his involvement in a dispute with Master Yi, his merchant guild would definitely lose clients and suppliers. Ruining a name that took centuries of hard work to build.

The members of the audience that recognized the Green Mizzle stance were shocked, and they could not quite believe what Master Yi used it voluntarily. Using the stance made Master Yi look pale as he was quietly catching his breath.

While the Ye family was recovering, the whole arena turned quiet. Humbled by the Runemaster’s offensive and healing powers. Everyone was frozen in awe.

They would never correctly guess the reason Master Yi did all this for the Ye family. But one thing was sure; the Ye’s were now out of bounds! Nobody would dare touch them again; they were protected by someone

incredible.

The members of bigger families who were present all had one thought in their minds, 'I need to tell the family about what just happened today... The Du family's greed, the Ye family's hidden strengths, and the power of Master Yi!' It was fortunate not many people related Master Yi's intervention to Ye Wei, or else the young talent would be in more danger than he could ever imagine.

With Master Yi now publically supporting the Ye family, their future was brighter than ever before. Not that the Ye family wanted to be carried by connections, but respect and fear are what they will learn to accept from now on as they got back to their everyday life.

The Ye family's reputation too had been restored. Not to the level it once was, but now they had a good foundation to become something amazing.

Chapter 44 – Legacy

The green rain was slowing, and the cloud of fog began to fade.

The Ye family was feeling fresh after ten minutes under Green Mizzle's affect, wounds on their bodies vanished, and even the small cracks in their Sentients disappeared. The rejuvenated Ye's started to regain consciousness and opened their eyes.

Although he was heavily injured compared to others, Ye Wei also slowly opened his eyes. Ye Zhong though was still unresponsive because his Sentient was far too damaged, to the point that it could not be repaired by even Master Yi's stance.

Ye Zhong's clothes were still shredded, but his body was now uninjured. What one could not see with the naked eye was his Sentient's state. It was broken into pieces and covered in hideous scars.

To protect his dear cousin, Ye Zhong ignored his injuries from fighting Du Han Yue. Not only did he use White Tiger's Assault when his body was in a terrible condition, but he also took a clean hit from Zhou Wu's Ichor Palm for Ye Wei.

‘It was a miracle Ye Zhong managed to live after taking a hit from someone with such a vast cultivation advantage over himself. It’s worth mentioning that he was completely out of will-force and Qi.’ Ye Zheng Qing sighed.

“Cousin Zhong!”

Ye Wei's eyes popped wide open the moment he regained full consciousness. He anxiously cast his eyes to where Ye Zhong was. His cousin protected him against the Ichor Palm with White Tiger's Assault was his last memory before fainting.

It was almost like time unfroze when he woke up, and it was his reflex to check if his cousin was okay.

Seeing his cousin lying unconscious with his eyes closed, Ye Wei teared up and crawled towards Ye Zhong. He sat next to the selfless Warrior and guarded his motionless body.

“Ye Wei! Are you okay?” Ye Wei’s could not care about anyone other than Ye Zhong while Lin Zi Yan could not worry about anyone else but Ye Wei. She wasn’t completely calm until she actually saw Ye Wei open his eyes. She looked relieved and exhausted from the distress.

“Zi Yan, Master Yi...” Ye Wei looked around him. He saw that Master Yi and Lin Zi Yan stood next to him, further away Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho were bleeding and were on their knees. It wasn’t long until he figured out what happened.

“Thank you, Master Yi! Thanks for saving us!” Ye Wei said from the bottom of his heart and bowed politely.

He figured out the what and when, but the why was still a mystery. Master Yi declined Ye Wei’s request just a while ago.

‘Why did he...’

‘It’s already been proven... I won’t even be able to perform a stance. Zi Yan must have convinced him somehow... How much do I owe her now.’

Oblivious to his actual capacity, Ye Wei was again opting to pathetic thoughts and couldn’t be more thankful to Lin Zi Yan for yet more help. Apart from that he was impressed by her influence, It’s hard even for influential figures to get an appointment with Master Yi, but not only did Zi Yan arranged the entry exam for him in a short notice now she got him to save his family and him.

‘Does she like me that much? How can I ever repay her?’ Ye Wei looked at Zi Yan, as she was looking at him nervously. Her pretty face showed nothing but concern over Ye Wei’s condition. Ye Wei’s heart melted because of this misunderstanding.

“I feel okay!” Ye Wei forcefully squeezed out a smile. His memories were slowly returning. He remembered how badly injured he was, thus realizing how far Master Yi went just to save him. ‘My torn Sentient, the broken bones, and muscles are now in perfect condition!’

“Master Yi, the Ye family is forever in your debt! We will never forget about this favor!” Ye Zheng Qing gathered up the family and bowed to the Runemaster. “If there is anything you can use manpower for, you can ask us anytime. We are three hundred strong, and ready to do anything you want us to!” The Ye Patriarch declared solemnly.

Although Master didn’t really need their help, Ye Zheng Qing’s sincerity did move him a little.

Upon hearing Ye Zheng Qing's touching speech, he waved his hand and said with a smile, "Don't mention it, I didn't do much! Furthermore..." Master Yi shifted his focus to Ye Wei as his eyes were full of joy. "Furthermore, I've decided to take Ye Wei as my apprentice, from now on he will be my legacy apprentice!"

Everyone who heard what Master Yi just said turned their head to Ye Wei. They couldn't believe their ears.

Master Yi had a few apprentices through the years, but all of them were just tutored occasionally, they were more like his assistants.

They were all good learners who had the potential to become Runemasters in their lives. But Master Yi did not think they were talented enough, and he never taught them his secrets. Master Yi merely guided them while the apprentices did self-study. Even those apprentices had great lives with their superb reputations, and now Ye Wei was appointed to become his legacy apprentice!

Though the announcement drew a lot of attention and jealousy, Master Yi's intention was met. He wanted everyone to know the Ye family was off limits! People were speechless and would appreciate the Ye family's status coming out of today's events.

Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho were kneeling close to the arena's center with their faces pale as if they were headed to the guillotine.

It was becoming apparent to them that they were now Master Yi's

enemies. One must know the relationship between masters and legacy apprentices were as close as fathers to their children.

During this time, Ye Wei was still confused; he wondered if something happened when he was unconscious that changed Master Yi's mind.

Master Yi kept his eyes on Ye Wei and continued his speech, "I have decided to pass all the knowledge and skills I possess onto Ye Wei!" Master Yi got excited just by thinking about Ye Wei's future. The child's innocence and humbleness would help the Runemaster mold him into something greater than anyone ever imagined, even greater than his own master.

Ye Zheng Qing was just quietly stood at the side, trying to digest everything he just heard. The message could not be any clearer. The renowned Master Yi, this outstanding Runemaster, had chosen his grandson as his legacy apprentice. Although he knew what it meant, it proved to be something that the Ye Patriarch could not fathom.

After processing the words they heard, the rest of the Yi family too became hysterical.

"Can you pinch me?"

"Little Wei? Legacy apprentice?"

Ye Wei's eyes were on Master Yi's gentle face while the Runemaster kindly asked a question. "I am not sure if I am qualified to teach someone like you, but would you like to be my, YI Yan's apprentice?"

How could Ye Wei in his right mind refuse? “Of course, I would love to be your apprentice!” He answered with slight confusion in his voice. “Greetings Master!” He bowed before Master Yi.

Master Yi burst into laughter looking Ye Wei’s clueless face. “Very good!” He replied.

The Ye family was feeling ecstatic, especially Ye Zheng Qing. He has been through ups and downs with his family, and after seeing it on the edge of crumbling, now he could see the silver lining. It was reasonable that he was in tears.

Ye Wei’s uncles too were overwhelmed by emotions as well. They were all startled by this unlikely source of intervention and honored to be related to Master Yi’s new apprentice.

‘Everything Master Yi knows? Just how lucky are the Ye’s today?’ From being in a dire situation to now being at a place everyone envied in just a morning, it was all to unfathomable. They knew too well what having a Runemaster in one’s family implied...

Chapter 45 – It's Not Fair

Contrary to the Ye family's elated mood, Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho were feeling unsettled and frightened.

The Du Patriarch perniciously looked at the Ye camp. He was so close to getting rid of them, and now they were about to get away as if nothing happened. The feeling of being stopped one step away from eradicating a threat was like nothing else, especially when they were going to come back stronger, and be protected by someone like Master Yi!

Most of the Ye youngsters had now woken up. They didn't think too much about Ye Zhong's condition, as he had endured the most injuries. It was reasonable if he woke up last.

Master Yi was relieved the moment he learned Ye Wei was fine, but he was still curious about why Ye Zhong was not moving. He frowned and narrowed his eyes. A golden flash appeared in his eyes after which he then cast his penetrating gaze onto Ye Zhong, checking his Qi flow and body condition.

He stared at the motionless body for ten seconds, looking worried and mournful.

“This child was gifted, it's such a shame...” He broke the silence after a thorough assessment. He shook his head resentfully and then a long, sad sigh followed.

Ye Zhong's name was the first thing that left Ye Wei's lips after he woke

up. Master Yi could tell from his observations that the cousins occupied a large place in each other's hearts. Due to that, he would do anything within his abilities to revive his apprentice's cousin from his coma.

But, sadly, this was not the case. Without the aid of a Welkin Leaf, Ye Zhong might never again see the sun due to his shattered Sentient!

Getting ahold of the rare herb would be just the first step. It could wake him, but the chance of his Sentient completely recovering was less than ten percent.

Ye Wei's heart dropped when he heard Master Yi's sigh; he asked anxiously, "Master Yi, is my cousin okay?" He nervously clenched his fists while waiting for his master's answer.

"Why is he not waking up?"

Ye Hai asked. The family was getting restless as they too heard the long sigh. Being a five star Warrior at the age of twenty-two, Ye Zhong was well on his way to overtake Ye Zheng Qing's cultivation, and he was the most likely candidate to the patriarch's position.

"This child's Sentient is shattered; he won't be waking up for the rest of his life." Master Yi did not fabricate facts; he did not know how to.

Master Yi's words struck the Ye's like a bolt of lightning that sent shivers down the group's spines. The patriarch and Ye Hai staggered and almost fell.

“But what do you mean? The Green Mizzle didn’t save him?!” Ye Hai couldn’t accept his son, the strongest youngster, and future of the Ye family was in a vegetative state.

“Shattered Sentient?” Master Yi voice echoed in Ye Wei’s head. “Won’t be waking up the rest of his life?” He was stupefied, standing still like a soulless being.

‘He did that for me... He was fighting an impossible fight against the general for me...’

With a bottomless sense of guilt stabbing at his heart, Ye Wei had severe chest pain. He could hardly breathe.

“Is there any other ways?” Ye Wei’s face showed determination, but his trembling voice told otherwise. He clenched his fist, and raised his head to look at Master Yi, “I will do anything for my cousin’s recovery, even if it means I have to go through hell.”

Inspired by Ye Wei’s stubbornness, Master Yi found the answer to the question. “If, a big if... If I can get ahold of some Welkin leaves, I should be able to restore his consciousness with a fancy stance. But that plant is extremely rare. With it, I will see what I can do!”

“Thanks, Master!” Ye Wei’s mood lightened slightly. ‘If master can’t find it, I will.’ He bowed to Master Yi again.

Du Yuan Ming, Zhou Wu, and Dong Ho knew they were going to be in trouble as they were responsible for every bit of Ye Zhong’s injuries. They

tried to sneak away from the scene quietly as the Ye's started talking about the youngster who was now in a vegetative state.

"Where do you think you're going?" Master Yi grunted, their sneakiness did not escape his cold gaze.

"Master Yi..." The three were shivering in fear. They would not be able to fight their way out of this situation, not alone, and not together.

"There were some misunderstandings between our family and the Ye's, but I realize now that we took it a bit too far due to our hotheadedness, and for that we apologize. We didn't do anything wrong, please just let us go!" Du Yuan Ming said with a trembling voice as he spoke quieter and quieter trying to excuse himself and his crew. He even put down his pride as a patriarch in front of Master Yi.

What Du Yuan Ming said opened Ye Wei's eyes. 'You did all this! You shamed, and harmed our family, and you dare say it's a misunderstanding? If Master is not going to make this right, I will revenge for my family when I am strong enough!'

Master Yi saw Ye Wei's hateful stare, and it just confirmed the Du family's wrongdoings. Without a second thought, he started moving his right hand. A long string of runes flew out of his fingertips, and a wave of Qi came crashing like high tide reaching the shore.

Golden Arhat Palm was one of Master Yi's powerful creations. For most people it was an honor to see his stances two times in one day, but not for these three.

Knowing its power, Du Yuan Ming quickly used the Onyx Tortoise stance. Raw primal energy stuck onto his body forming a thick black armor that covered every inch of his skin. Zhou Wu roared like a lion and quickly finished a rune sequence, “Primal Blockade!” The runes in his palm grew around themselves; eventually, they dug into and shook the ground forming a hefty Qi wall that stood tall in front of him. ‘Glacial Casket!’ Dong Ho grunted. His fat was shaking as he channeled Qi. Four sheets of dense ice froze around his body forming a large coffin, shining blue and seemingly impenetrable.

They were not going to fight back to further anger the most powerful man in this corner of the land; therefore, they opted to defend themselves the best they could.

Master Yi grunted and continued channeling his ruthless attack. The golden palms viciously landed on the three’s defenses.

Soon as the palms hit, Du Yuan Ming’s armors frayed; Zhou Wu’s wall disintegrated and the ice of Dong Ho’s shattered.

Dong Ho got hit the hardest as his defense was completely irrelevant, it only took one golden palm to get him out of the picture. He was sent flying and fell twenty meters away from the point of impact. He screamed on the ground in pain when he was not puking blood.

It wasn’t much better for the general and the patriarch despite their defense being more solid due to their cultivation, the palms were therefore slowed, but they still left dents on their bodies and damaged their meridians which obstructed Qi flow in their systems causing intolerable pain.

Karma bites, sometimes sooner than people expect. It had been a while since the three feared death.

Master Yi stared down onto the Du patriarch and said coldly: “I don’t think there is a place for the Du family in this city.” His sharp voice petrified the Du family members, and they were aware the Runemaster could squeeze them like ants.

“Greetings Master Yi! I am not one of them. I am from the Lu family in Ning City! Please don’t harm a civilian!” The stern-faced teenager was scared too; he never thought things would go bad with the Du’s.

‘Humm he’s pretty talented better than the kid in a coma, but nothing comparing to Ye Wei, and he sounds like a two faced punk!’ Master Yi looked at him with a penetrating stare and thought. “What are you doing here then? Piss off!” He flicked his sleeve intensely at the Lu teen.

The teenager’s talent and gestures were not going to save him today. Master Yi’s invisible strike lashed at him quicker than he could blink, and he didn’t have time to use a defensive stance, all he could do was raising his arms which broke like twigs from the pressure wave. He flew like a small rock skipping a lake’s surface; after bouncing off the ground a few times, he was stopped by a side wall in the arena. He bled from his mouth and laid motionless on the ground twisted like a tangled string puppet.

Only barely conscious, he decided to pretend he was dead and hope someone from his family would save him when the dust settled.

Master Yi's strange temper horrified everyone at the scene, even the Ye's. They were now his friends, but they would have to be on their best behavior if they were going to keep contact with this loose cannon.

One minute he was smiling, the next he was breaking bones like it was nothing. Seeing Master Yi's wrath was more vivid than fearing the Grim Reaper.

Out of the silence came a voice. "Master Yi, this is not fair!" Du Yuan Ming was on his knees, taking what might be his last chance to speak his mind.

Chapter 46 – One Point Six Million

Master Yi swung his arm hard and fast. A heavy slam landed on Du Yuan Ming's cheek and sent him flying. The patriarch then landed heavily on the ground.

Three teeth were knocked out of his mouth when he was hit; his mouth was leaking blood and his cheek was swollen to the size of a mandarin. Du Yuan Ming was shaking, but that did not stop him trying to negotiate for his family members' lives. "Mashter Yea thish ish not phare!" It was a chilling scene. Just moments ago he was the bully, and now the Du Patriarch was a convincing victim.

Another swing, this time on the other cheek. The patriarch took flight once again after a loud clap resounded.

"Argoh aoh Ii..." His speech was no longer audible, nor was his face recognisable as it covered in tears, snot, and blood.

Zhou Wu could see Master Yi was about to lose his temper and deliver the killing blow so he threw himself in front of Du Yuan Ming and begged, "Master Yi! Please show us mercy?! Please give us a reason!"

"Why don't I show you mercy? The real question is why didn't you show mercy?" Master Yi answered calmly. He flicked his sleeve at Zhou Wu, and knocked him to the ground where he belonged.

He would not reason with the unreasonable.

Zhou Wu refused to stay on the floor waiting to be slaughtered. He climbed back up and kneeled towards Master Yi again while both Du Yuan Ming and Dong Ho were rolling on the ground, dazed and confused.

“Master Yi, please listen to me!” It was hard to tell what emotions Zhou Wu was experiencing from his facial expression considering how swollen he was. His trembling voice, though, gave it away.

“You have ten seconds, use it well.” Master Yi had complete control over life and death for the moment.

Zhou Wu was just blowing air more than he spoke. “Killing us won’t benefit you or the Ye family! We understand our wrongdoings, and we will do anything to help out the Ye family if you let us live. We have learned our lesson! Furthermore, ending our lives here will anger other branches of the Du family, and cause more bloodshed and hatred. It would not be worth the hassle!”

Master Yi raised an eyebrow, and it took him a few seconds to register the logic coming out of Zhou Wu’s comedically swollen face.

Zhou Wu felt that his speech hit the right note therefore he continued: “We promise, if you let us leave this arena alive, we will never bother the Ye family again. We will help and protect them whenever they need us!”

Master Yi was waiting for a declaration like that. He still looked cold, but it was all an act. He knew being ruthless wouldn’t help the situation, and he did not plan to kill anybody, not today, not any other day. He did

what he did because examples needed to be set, and words needed to spread: do *not* touch the Ye's. He had experiences with hatred, revenge, and their consequences.

The Runemaster then looked to Ye Zheng Qing, "Patriarch, what do you think?"

Ye Patriarch glared hatefully at Du Yuan Ming, who would need months to recover from the injuries the Runemaster inflicted and said, "It's up to you Master Yi."

"If you want satisfaction, I have no problems killing these guys for you, but consider the consequences!" Master Yi said solemnly. He kept his act up as he wanted Ye Zheng Qing to come to the right conclusion by himself.

"Well, looks like they've learned their lesson. I will let this go!" The patriarch replied after a long sigh. Though he was glad his family got through this crisis and realised revenge doesn't solve anything, but he was still heartbroken for Ye Zhong's sufferings.

'They better pray for cousin Zhong, If he doesn't wake up I will still make them pay!' Ye Wei clenched his fists. He understood and respected his grandfather's noble decision, though still clouded by anger he was ready to let it go for now and focus on reviving Ye Zhong.

Master Yi coldly glared at everyone in the Du camp then grunted. "I will let you live, but compensation is in order! For all mess you've made!"

The Du's were slightly relieved knowing they would live to see another day. This was one of the best outcomes they could wish for now that someone who could easily eradicate them was involved.

"So, the Du family is going to pay a million silver to the Ye family, and I expect Dong Ho and Zhou Wu to pay the Ye's three hundred thousand silver each!" Master Yi calmly said, without any hesitation.

Upon hearing the request the trio went from relieved to shocked.

The Ye family was worth around three hundred thousand silver whereas the Du family was worth roughly two million silver. Although the Du's were richer but to gather that much money would not be an easy task. They would need to sell half of the family's assets! And as for Zhou Wu and Dong Ho, three hundred thousand was about three-quarters of their assets.

"Mashter Yee..." Du Yuan Ming's could barely speak, with a sincere look he wanted to ask for a reduction, but the Runemaster's mind was made.

"May I remind you that you hurt my legacy apprentice? You'd normally have to pay with your lives!" Master Yi stared at Du Yuan Ming and said with an angry voice before the patriarch could finish his sentence.

Although the request was outrageous, they were in no position to refuse. They just had to swallow their unwillingness and be grateful for Master Yi's harsh mercy.

"You have three days to deliver the full amount, or else!" Master Yi

grunted then turned his face back towards the Ye's.

Master Yi's angry face was branded onto Du Yuan Ming's face. He was not sure if he would be able to come up with that much money on such short notice, but he didn't talk back because of the stress and having a huge headache was better than dying.

The damage done was not what money could compensate, but money talks. The Ye Patriarch was smart enough to know the family would benefit more from the money than from the rest of the Du family from every corner of the land looking for revenge. He took a deep breath and thought, 'I can probably buy some Welkin Leaves for little Zhong with that money!'

"Are you satisfied with this arrangement?" Master Yi asked Ye Zheng Qing.

The Ye Patriarch nodded and said: "Thank you Master Yi! If it wasn't for you, not only wouldn't we get compensation, the Ye family would not be here right now."

"We will be on our way now!" The Du family no longer had business here, they bid farewell and headed back.

"This is over only for now! If my cousin does not recover, I will see you again!" Ye Wei shouted, he was just a student but his words were not to be taken lightly. The Du's trembled and left the arena, nobody dared look back.

It wasn't long ago Du Yuan Ming wanted Ye Zhong dead, now, however, the tables had turned, and he was praying for Ye Zhong instead. "One day we will have satisfaction! You better hope Master Yi does not die before I do..." With each of his arm over a youngster's shoulder, the Du Patriarch mumbled while limping away from the arena.

Back inside the arena, Ye Wei was fighting his resentment. He was calming down slowly, but anger could still be seen in his fiery eyes. Lin Zi Yan gently pat his back after noticing this and said in a soft, comforting voice: "Don't worry, we will find a way to wake him up!"

"Yea!" To Ye Wei, Lin Zi Yan's voice seemed to have a mysterious soothing effect.

The audience left the arena soon after the Du family's departure.

Within days, the news regarding Master Yi's newly acquired legacy apprentice spread between the martial families, some of them sent gifts and medical supplies to the Ye mansion. Weeks after, most citizens of Green Moon City would learn and reposition the Ye family in their hearts.

Chapter 47 – Four Star Student

“Just stay home and rest for the next few days. I will search for Welkin Leaves, you will be the first to know if I get a hold of one.” Master Yi earnestly rubbed Ye Wei’s head, and he could feel his grieving apprentice’s frustration. The Runemaster also understood there was no point training Ye Wei right now because distracted minds don’t process knowledge efficiently; Ye Wei could even hurt himself training if he’s not focused.

“Thank you master!” Ye Wei gratefully answered.

“Ye Wei, I will get out there and also see if I can gather any information regarding Welkin Leaves! Promise me you will take care of yourself!” Lin Zi Yan could see the sorrow in Ye Wei’s frown; it was a heartbreakingly sight.

“Yea, thanks so much Zi Yan!” He nodded.

Master Yi and Lin Zi Yan boarded the runicle together and left.

Although they left, what they did today would stay in people’s hearts forever. Nobody in Green Moon City would dare to make a move against them in the foreseeable future!

A while after they left, the Ye’s placed Ye Zhong in a quiet part of the mansion, and he was carefully guarded by a dozen men.

Days after the duel the mansion became a busy place. It was filled with representatives from different martial families wanting to see Ye Wei. As for the hot topic himself, he occupied a room in Ye Zhong's quarter, and kept his door closed to meditate and cultivate.

In a house on the east side of Green Moon City, a slim built, handsome man was furious. His name was Lu Feng. A few feet away from him there was a bed where the stern-faced teenager was lying, spasming every half a minute or so.

“Imbeciles! You had one job! Damn it! Why was Master Yi there? How did some nobody from the Ye family suddenly became his legacy apprentice?” Lu Feng threw vases onto the floor, Master Yi’s intervention destroyed his plan completely. He was greatly discouraged, but he had not given up. He went back to the drawing board, ‘No more mistakes! I need their ancestral land!’

Though for now he would have to lay low because their family name was mentioned in the Ye family arena, and even his father feared Master Yi. ‘Ye Wei huh? Just you wait, I will love to see what a little Student can do without your master!’ An insolent smile appeared on Lu Feng’s pale face.

Back at the Ye mansion.

Although Ye Wei was still a child, his position in the Ye family has changed drastically. His uncles and aunts would talk to him before making some decisions regarding the family business, even the patriarch would sometimes consult him.

However, Ye Wei's mind was elsewhere. He was distracting himself from worrying about his cousin by cultivating. The bullying from his classmates, betrayed by Joe Yan, and more recently the dispute with the Du family... All these little events became motivation for Ye Wei; he hungered for power, he wanted control.

Strength is the most realistic foundation of anything in this dog-eat-dog world. He realised he had been saved by dumb luck too many times, and one day his luck might just run out.

‘My rune consonance is dirt, I have to train as hard as I can! Maybe a miracle will happen... I can’t let Master Yi down. I can imagine teaching someone like me would be easy for him.’

‘I wonder what Zi Yan said or did to change Master Yi’s mind. Anyway, I can’t let either of them down now that everyone knows I am his legacy apprentice!’ While taking a break from self-training, Ye Wei looked back on the past few weeks.

Both Lin Zi Yan and Master Yi did not mention anything to anyone including Ye Wei regarding the actual result of Ye Wei’s rune consonance test. It was safer that way, when Ye Wei was stronger he would figure it out himself, and furthermore Master Yi thought the lack of confidence was a good trait to have for an apprentice. He wanted to keep it that way. Pride has always driven people away from greatness.

‘I just want to be able to use stances... Why didn’t Master Yi take me to train?’ Ye Wei clenched his fists so hard his knuckles went white and his veins bulged.

Learning about his non-existence rune consonance was more traumatizing than being told about his red Sentient, but one's attitude can change things. 'Usually Students can use stances when they reach the seventh star, but maybe I will be able to use stances when I am a Warrior! I just have to train!' His eyes showed determination.

'My body feels... stronger. Did Master Yi do something to me other than healing?' The Runemaster did mend his muscles, bones, and even his Sentient, but what strengthened Ye Wei's body was the golden flash in his Sentient. Little did Ye Wei know his body was ready for another breakthrough. "Let's get back to work..." Ye Wei mumbled to himself while carefully reached for a jade pill bottle. He then poured a Fiery Sun Quencher pill onto the middle of his palm.

The Ye Patriarch gave Ye Wei quite a lot of Quencher pills, but none of them could compare to the ones Lin Zi Yan gave him. Ye Wei only consumed one out of the ten Fiery Sun Quencher pills, which aided his breakthrough to two star level days ago.

'Ye Wei, one small step at a time.' He took a few slow, deep breaths to clear his mind. When his mind was as calm as a still lake's surface, he took the pill. It melted in his mouth immediately, and it took only moments before his body started heating up from the surge of energy entering Ye Wei's bloodstream.

The hot but tender energy circulated through Ye Wei's veins, and it turned his skin red. From the bloodstream into his muscles and bones, the surge was absorbed almost immediately. His muscles started vibrating at a high frequency as they grew bigger and tougher. There was even a soft metallic glow on his skin where his pressure points lay, as the Quencher upgraded his body. The vibration quickened and turned into a humming sound. This was a sign of the breakthrough into four star level!

As the humming sounds intensified, so did the glow on his pressure points. The metallic green glowing points suddenly started linking to one another, and Ye Wei's body was slowly covered by a shining green web.

It took Ye Wei around four hours to fully absorb the pill's energy. The green glow on his skin became brighter and clearer and all the muscles and bones in his body were shaking, this was it! His Sentient glowed gold as he became a four star Warrior!

“Did I just became a four star Warrior!?” Ye Wei was euphoric. He opened his eyes and looked at his glowing body.

Normally it takes Students years to reach the four star level, but in the frame of merely few days he advanced three levels! After his next breakthrough, the green web would become an inner skin that glows when Qi flows into it, this reinforcement will make Ye Wei's skin hard as iron.

From the worst in class to a four star Student, at the age of thirteen, Ye Wei had now overtaken most of the Students around his age is his class. There were only seven of his classmates at four star level, and of course Xiao Qi who was a five star Student.

He couldn't yet compare himself to the prodigies in class of the gifted, but he was above average to say the least, and not the piece of trash he once was!

‘Falling Star form!’ Ye Wei didn't stop after the breakthrough. He adjusted his breathing, and made a complex hand seal then started

cultivating again. A will-force vortex formed and grew between his eyebrows, it sucked energy into his body from around him. He was taught a mid Myst form by his family, but a few days ago Ye Wei discovered that the Falling Star form was originally a high Myst form when he was hallucinating.

Ye Wei's improved Falling Star form purifies energy a few times quicker because of its complex routes. It directs the silver primal energy through one hundred and eight meridians as opposed to the simplified form's thirty-six.

After running the improved Falling Star form the whole night, a vast amount of primal energy had circled Ye Wei's body been purified and now was stored in Ye Wei's dantian ready to be used by the new four star Student.

'I forgot to tell gramps about the improved Falling Star form! I need to do that when I see him, so he can start teaching it to the others!' Ye Wei opened his eyes after a whole day of training. During which many visitors had asked to see him, but were kindly declined by the Ye Patriarch.

Seeing the graceful morning he immediately narrowed his eyes again because of the bright sun. He relaxingly took a deep breath as summer breeze caressed his childish face, after which he stretched his body and felt his newfound strength.

"Things are going well... Hopefully I'll get news from Master Yi or Zi Yan soon..." Ye Wei mumbled to himself, though he was in a good place, he was still bothered by his cousin's condition.

Chapter 48 – Proposal

“Knock! Knock!”

The day after his breakthrough, Ye Wei slept very well. The sound of a few quick knocks on the door woke him up early in the morning. “Son, are you awake?” Joe Wan asked soft and gently.

“Mom? What’s going on? Is breakfast ready?” Ye Wei clumsily opened the door and narrowed his eyes to the person who looked like his mom.

Lit by the morning sun, Joe Wan’s kind smile seemed warmer than usual. “You stink, go get changed.” She urged after pulling her son’s robe to her nose, sniffing it then frowning and narrowing her eyes.

“Huh... Why? What’s happening? You look suspiciously excited.” Ye Wei could tell his mom was hiding something from him by looking at her posture and happy face.

“Something great is going to happen! Just shower and get changed already! You are our family’s pride and Master Yi’s legacy apprentice. You have to be presentable at all times!” Though she started to get a little annoyed, the proud mother was still wearing a smile on her face while gently pushed Ye Wei towards the bathroom.

“Okay...” Slightly confused by the intrusion, Ye Wei reluctantly shook his head then took a quick bath.

Ye Wei was a good looking young man, and even more so now that he was in a dashing white robe. “Yea, that’s better!” Joe Wan straightened the creases and made sure the robe was sitting right. She then nodded satisfactorily. ‘I don’t remember him being this tall...’ She was both proud and sad, sad that time flew by and because she knew her son would not need her soon.

“Mom, can you please tell me what’s going on now?”

“We are all waiting for you, just get to the great hall! You will know soon enough.” Joe Wan winked and smiled as she dragged Ye Wei through the corridors.

“The great hall? What’s the occasion?” Obediently he followed his mom’s lead, scratching his head in confusion. It was hard for him to make sense out of anything this morning.

They followed the stone pathway and hallways and ended up at the bottom of a small set of stairs that led to a magnificent building with a symmetrically arched roof. It was supported by thick, sculpted pillars. Ye Wei pulled back his shoulders then followed his mother into the great hall.

The pair of old wooden doors to this spacious great hall were usually closed, and the fact that they were open meant the family had important guests over.

The great hall was crowded and loud for how early it was. The patriarch too was present, chatting with people around him in his designated seat. On his left sat his sons and daughter, they all wore a smile on their faces.

On his right sat the guests, all of them were familiar faces.

The ruddy-faced old man with white hair and beard sat directly to Ye Zheng Qing's left was none other than Joe Zheng Feng, the Joe Patriarch.

The Joe's and the Ye's friendship spanned generations. Ye Wei's mother was from one of the Joe family branches. Ye Wei had seen today's guests since he was a toddler. However, they stopped associating themselves with the Ye family three months ago when Du Yuan Ming started their campaign.

To the Joe Patriarch's right sat a boy and a girl, they were both wearing traditional family robes. The boy had a cold look, and he sat as straight as bamboo. This young man's eyebrows were arching slightly arrogantly, and the confidence and glow in his eyes drew some of the young Ye girls' attention.

The girl was around Ye Wei's age, her ear length black hair was luxurious and glossy. The old fashioned family robe contrasted her playful vibe. It was obvious she spent some time getting ready this morning as the womanly features perfectly emphasized her youthful face.

Ye Wei frowned. Under no circumstances will he forget that face, she insulted him twice at South Star Academy, and in their last encounter he was told: "Dragons don't associate with snakes."

"What the hell is she doing here?" Ye Wei mumbled and quietly grunted. He couldn't bare to look at her for more than a second, so he switched his attention to his family. "Good morning grandpa, dad,

uncles, and aunt Jing Jing!"

"You can take a seat little Wei!" The proud smile made Ye Zheng Qing look a decade younger. Ye Wei's aunt and uncles too smiled genuinely at the young talent. The front door-sill of the mansion had been worn down by all the visiting representatives from the different martial families since the duel. Despite that fact that dealing with an endless line of guests was tiring, the family did gain a lot because of Ye Wei.

Ye Wei saw two empty seats next to his aunt, Jing Jing. He realized that this was the first time he got assigned a seat that was so close to the patriarch.

Ye Jing Jing started talking before Ye Wei could sit down. "Little Wei, have you seen how pretty Joe Yin has gotten? She is going to become a very attractive woman in a few years... And I've heard she broke through not so long ago! A six star Student at her age! That's quite something, right? If I remember correctly, you two were like two peas in a pod a few years ago. Do you two hang out at school?" She looked at Ye Wei and Joe Yin alternately while speaking with a cheeky smile.

"Hang out?" Ye Wei sat down and replied with a sarcastic smile on his face. 'With her mentality, I should not be associated with her! I am Master Yi's legacy apprentice, and I will overtake her cultivation soon enough!' The bitterness soon calmed down. Ye Wei replayed the two insulting encounters with Joe Yin in his head countless times since they happened. Although he decided to move on, the memories still bothered him.

A silhouette of a long-haired, slim girl appeared in Ye Wei's mind. 'She has nothing on Zi Yan. Talent, personality, appearance and Zi Yan is

always on my side even through the bad times.' Ye Wei suddenly found himself comparing Joe Yin to Lin Zi Yan.

Ye Zheng Qing's loud laugh snapped Ye Wei out of his imagination. He was chatting with Joe Zheng Feng about their childhood. The fun, nostalgic episodes of themselves growing up together and more recently how Ye Wei had become the talk of the town caused him to laugh loudly.

It was not an interesting conversation for anyone else but the two patriarchs. "Little Wei, why do you think the Joe's are here with Joe Yin and Joe Pei?" Aunt Jing Jing started talking to Ye Wei quietly.

"Erm... To show off?" Ye Wei answered. It was not a secret that the Joe Patriarch loved bringing the two most talented youngster of his family to social meetings, and that he was very proud of them. He had never come to the Ye Mansion without them on his side after their birth.

Ye Jing Jing laughed: "Ha ha, what bragging rights they have now that you are doing so well! I think they are here for a marriage proposal!" Ye Wei's face turned ashen white, and aunt Jing Jing patted his back when she saw how nervous her nephew became.

"You can't be serious?" Ye Wei looked at Joe Yin only to discover her eyes were fixed on him. Her face immediately turned red as she lowered her head.

Joe Yin was extremely frustrated because she despised Ye Wei ever since she started at South Star Academy. When she learned the news regarding Ye Wei's new master, she spent half a day convincing herself what she heard was not real and the other half cringing in her room. Lin

Zi Yan's insult started to make sense, and she regretted her rudeness. 'No wonder why he was hanging out with someone like Lin Zi Yan...'

Ye Jing Jing's assumption was correct. When Joe Patriarch heard Ye Wei had become Master Yi's only legacy apprentice and how the Runemaster fought off the Du family's best men, he immediately wanted to befriend the Ye's again. 'What can link two families together better than a marriage does?' With that in mind, the Joe Patriarch had a brief chat with Joe Yin. They established that the marriage would be great for both her and the family, and in the end having a legacy apprentice son in law was the same as having Master Yi in his family. And being Master Yi's extended family is what many could only dream about.

Joe Yin knew how much Ye Wei always cared for her and liked her; she believed a sincere apology would put her back into Ye Wei's heart. She was a beautiful girl with a lot of admirers, and she was aware of that, thus assumed Ye Wei would not say no to her.

Although she was intimidated by how close Lin Zi Yan and Ye Wei had become, she was convinced that she could win him back with her charms as spoiled as she was her confidence and arrogance didn't let her think otherwise.

Chapter 49 – Decision

Ye Wei chuckled when he saw Joe Yin's fake charming look as he knew better now. 'Does she think I am stupid enough to be manipulated by her?' He was more repulsed than charmed.

"Joe Yin is very mature for her age, and not to mention she's a talented girl! She is already a six star Student, and destined to become a Warrior at a young age!" Joe Wan couldn't take her eyes off the young girl she saw as a good daughter in law.

Nobody could blame her, the idea of having a Warrior daughter in law was very attractive.

Joe Wan was a distant relative of the Joe's visiting today. She heard the rumor of a marriage proposal involving her son and Joe Yin before anyone in the Ye family even knew they were going to have the Joe's as visitors.

She was ecstatic after hearing the news, and Joe Wan would be lying if she said she never thought about her son and Joe Yin marrying each other. Now that the day had arrived she could no longer contain herself.

Ye Wei finally understood why his mom was so excited. He shook his head and decided it was not an enthusiasm he shared. He had no interest in someone like Joe Yin!

Back in the days when they were children, Ye Wei did like Joe Yin, and they were very close to each other. But that was not the case now, not

because she wasn't pretty enough, not because she wasn't talented enough to match Master Yi's legacy apprentice, but because he had seen her true colors.

When he was going through hardships in his life, not only Joe Yin was not there to support him, but she looked down on Ye Wei when he was suffering. If that had not changed his opinion about Joe Yin, the recent insult surely did. It was not easy to come to terms with how little he meant to Joe Yin, but Ye Wei dealt with the negativities and saw the bright side of things with a little help from his friends and family.

“Zheng Qing, My brother! Your family is surely doing better with Ye Wei now appointed as Master Yi’s Legacy Apprentice! That is an enviable honor!” Joe Zheng Feng’s energy did not match his white hair and beard. He expressed his heartfelt respect to the Ye Patriarch with great enthusiasm.

“Ah don’t mention it, the young ones in your family are not doing so bad themselves! Joe Pei is what? Twenty-two? It’s admirable that he is already a five star Warrior!” While on the topic Ye Zheng Qing thought about Ye Zhong, and he was slightly saddened. “And you have Joe Yin; she’s a six star Student right?!”

“They are nothing compared to little Wei!” The Joe Patriarch could not stop looking at Ye Wei enviously. He was willing to do a lot of things if in return he could call Master Yi’s Legacy Apprentice his son in law. “By the way! Ye Wei is already thirteen years old if I remember correctly, is he engaged to anyone? It’s about time for him to think about marriage don’t you think?” Joe Zheng Feng sipped his cup of tea acting as casual as he could.

In this age of the Zhou Dynasty sixteen year olds was the time when one was considered an adult. Not only was it common for children to get engaged at the age of twelve and married by sixteen, it was actually encouraged. Humanity always needed new blood to fight the savage beasts and demons.

It has only been a few days, but news of Ye Wei becoming Master Yi's Legacy Apprentice already spread far and wide. A few families had already come knocking on their doors discussing possibilities of their young daughters getting engaged to Ye Wei. But Ye Zheng Qing turned them all down because he was not satisfied with them.

"I don't know about that; we have to be very careful who we match Ye Wei with. We don't want to upset Master Yi. He should have a say about Ye Wei's future too!" Ye Zheng Qing knew exactly what Joe Zheng Feng was implying as he looked at Joe Yin then replied calmly.

After the Du family started their campaign against the Ye's, the Joe's didn't think twice before cutting all ties with the Ye's. Ye Zheng Qing could understand the reasoning behind it, but he was still not entirely comfortable with how swift the Joe's handled it without even consulting him.

The Ye Patriarch was disappointed in the Joe family, but he was also aware Ye Wei and Joe Yin were close, if Ye Wei wanted to marry her he would not say no.

"Zheng Qing brother! What do you think about Joe Yin? Ye Wei and her basically grew up together, and they understand each other very well I think! What do you say to giving them a life together?" Joe Zheng Feng attempted to hide his nerves; therefore, he suggested the matter in a

joking tone.

Knowing the Ye family won't really get anything out of the marriage, Ye Zheng Qing played dumb: "Oh! I've never thought about it!" Not denying the request altogether as he was under the impression Ye Wei might be in favor of this arrangement.

The Ye Patriarch actually had an idea of matching Ye Wei with Joe Yin, but it was put to the side when Ye Wei's embarrassing South Star Academy entry test results got revealed.

With her talent and potential aside, Ye Zheng Qing had always been charmed by Joe Yin's wittiness. The picky patriarch was starting to convince himself that this engagement might actually make Ye Wei happy.

"See? What did I tell you?" Aunt Jing Jing rubbed Ye Wei's head and said in a cheeky voice. "About time if you ask me!"

When Joe Zheng Feng dropped the obvious hint, all of Ye Wei's uncles cast their eyes onto Joe Yin and briefly evaluated, after which they all nodded and smiled satisfactorily at her.

Ye Wei's mom too was wearing a big smile. She was glad that her son could have someone this excellent by his side. Joe Wan was ready to spoil her new daughter in law!

Joe Yin was not stupid, and she slowly curled her lips into the cutest smile she could, seeing the older Ye's eyes were all set on her. She was

slightly bothered with how their eyes met hers so she looked at Ye Wei instead, never had she ever been this flustered before. Ye Wei was an unworthy friend in her mind for so long, but now all the negative perceptions about him were replaced by his prestigious position, and Joe Yin started to realize how good looking he was, and how he was actually good enough for her.

All but one person was excited, and he did not get carried away thinking about the engagement, not one strand of Ye Wei's facial muscles were contracted. He was sitting still with an emotionless straight face. Ye Wei knew that if he stayed quiet, then Ye Zheng Qing would seal the deal. "Gramps!" He took a deep breath and stood up.

"Little Wei, what's the matter?" Ye Zheng Qing was slightly confused. Why did his grandson look sad and concerned? 'You won the girl! Why do you look mad? Young kids are so eager these days!'

"Gramps, I do not wish to be engaged just yet..." The calm voice of Ye Wei's provoked everyone in the great hall. They widened their eyes and put them on the Runemaster's apprentice.

'What? They would look good together! And he's thirteen! Hasn't he always been close to Joe Yin?'

The Ye Patriarch's mind went blank for a while he frowned then apologetically waved at the embarrassed Joe Zheng Feng.

Being the patriarch, the news of his engagement request getting declined would make him a laughingstock in Green Moon City. With that in mind, Joe Wan and Ye Jing Jing pulled Ye Wei's robe simultaneously

trying to pull him down and make the situation less awkward for everyone in the hall.

Though Ye Wei tried to sound as mild as possible by not directly declining the idea of an engagement, but even still both the guests and the hosts could not help but cringe a little. They all thought the two would make a beautiful match.

Ye Wei ignored his mom and aunt's wishes, and kept standing regardless of how hard they were pulling his robe. 'Not this time...'

He didn't like Joe Yin anymore and was afraid he would have to spend the rest of his life with someone he couldn't trust. Yes, she was gorgeous and talented, but Ye Wei's trust had been shattered from the two times Joe Yin insulted him and left him in the ditch.

It was not hard to figure out Ye Wei and Joe Yin had bad blood now judging by the way he was looking at her. Knowing the deal was probably not going to happen, Joe Zheng Feng failed to keep up the casual act. He stood up and said: "Little Wei, did Joe Yin wrong you somehow? You don't look too happy! If that's the case, we can talk it over! I will be a fair judge and the peace-maker!"

Chapter 50 – Cracks

“It has nothing to do with Joe Yin. I’ve just became Master Yi’s apprentice, and I want to focus on learning and training. Getting engaged and married would be distracting right now.” Ye Wei calmly said while looking at Joe Yin, who was looking down to avoid eye contact.

He did not hate Joe Yin, nor did he hold a grudge because of what she said to him. It was her own choice to behave the way she did and Ye Wei just could not trust her. If Joe Yin didn’t really care about him, there was no point for him to invest his emotion in this relationship.

Telling everyone what Joe Yin said to him certainly won’t help, nor would apologies do anything meaningful. Trust is like a mirror; you can fix it if it’s broken, but you can still see the cracks in the reflection.

Ye Wei was over Joe Yin. He did not want to get even with her, and he did not want anything to do with her.

Joe Zheng Feng noticed the difference. Ye Wei used to smile when he called Joe Yin’s name, and it used to sound sweet. The Joe Patriarch knew in his heart that it was over. If Ye Wei doesn’t like Joe Yin anymore, nothing can be done. Even if Ye Zheng Qing doesn’t agree with him, he would respect and follow his grandson’s wish. It won’t be surprising if Ye Wei could find someone better than Joe Yin.

Experiencing humiliation for the first time, Joe Yin widened her beautiful eyes in disbelief. She had never been rejected before!

Since Joe Yin was a little girl, she had countless boys complementing and tailing her every move. She genuinely thought Ye Wei would still dance on her palm if she told him to.

But that was not the case! Joe Yin's heart ached like it was stabbed and tears built up around her eyes uncontrollably.

“Why?” Joe Yin raised her head to look at Ye Wei then screamed. “Is it because of Lin Zi Yan?”

“Why?” Ye Wei was disgusted with how his discreet response was not appreciated. He laughed and replied, “Joe Yin, you know better don’t you? You told me we don’t live in the same world. You told me dragons don’t associate with snakes. You said that in front of tens of South Star Students outside Green Phoenix Halls. I forgave you, and now you feel insulted?”

“Joe Yin, don’t be so self-centered! The world does not revolve around you. You are a pretty girl, and because of it there is always a queue of boys following you, doing whatever you tell them to even if you treat them like dirt. That is not me!”

“Do you think I cared about you because I fancied you like those other boys? You could not be more incorrect... I cared about you like you were my sibling, It hurt when I realized you don’t care about me the same way.”

“When I got my Sentient test result back, how did you treat me? You couldn’t get away from me fast enough. You didn’t want to be seen with me for all that time, and now that I am Master Yi’s legacy apprentice you

would like to be engaged to me?”

“I don’t want your fake attention! If I get married I want someone who really cares about me! Yes, you are pretty and talented, but my future wife will be a better person than you!”

Ye Wei did not want to make a scene, but when Joe Yin shamelessly talked back, he needed to get that negativity out of his head and draw the line. He also wished Joe Yin would realize how manipulative she was!

These words stabbed Joe Yin’s heart like a sharp knife. Two lines of tears ran down her cheek as Ye Wei finished his rant.

Ye Wei always treated her well and those words did hurt, but Joe Yin was more emotional than she appeared to be...

Memories came crashing like a tide overwhelming Joe Yin’s mind.

They used to play together, train together. Ye Wei always shared toys and treats with Joe Yin. Every time he was nice to her, she would pull the corner of his robe and say “Thank you Wei Wei!”

It was not before now that Joe Yin realized she misunderstood Ye Wei and that she might be losing someone who genuinely cared for her. She thought Ye Wei was one of her admirers and no matter how far she gets ahead, he would always be there when she turned around. However, what she saw right now was that Ye Wei was further away, at an unreachable place. Joe Yin just wanted him to care for her again, to be reachable again.

“Ye Wei, will you forgive me? I know it’s my fault, I messed up!” In the beginning, Joe Yin felt undignified but Ye Wei’s emotionless face somehow hurt her. She started to understand how much her arrogance and willfulness actually wounded him. “Whatever it may be, I will change it for the better!” Joe Yin said.

Seeing tears streaming down her face, Ye Wei let out a long sigh. “Joe Yin can you stop being so dramatic? You don’t get it... If I was not Master Yi’s legacy apprentice, I really don’t see you apologizing. You’ve hurt me enough, and I am sure we have grown apart now.”

After hearing Ye Wei’s confession, Joe Yin could feel nothing but guilt. She knew if Ye Wei did not become the Runemaster’s apprentice she would probably still be ignoring him, neglecting his feelings. She truly felt guilty and regretful, and she realized the bond they had might never come back.

“I’m sorry, but I have to check on cousin Zhong now, excuse me.” Ye Wei bid his farewell, nodded at Joe Zheng Feng then headed out the door.

If the Runemaster’s legacy apprentice wanted to leave the room nobody could stop him, not even the Joe Patriarch.

A drop of golden sunshine landed on Ye Wei at the hall’s entrance. It lightened up his mood as he stepped away from the drama. He took a deep breath then moved on.

Looking at Ye Wei’s silhouette getting further and further away, Joe Yin

felt emptiness and a sense of unease. She would later learn that something irreplaceable just left her life.

There was tension building up inside the great hall as Ye Wei departed.

Joe Zheng Feng felt as if he was sitting on a carpet made of needles. He did not know the relationship between Joe Yin and Ye Wei was this dire. He took a sip from his teacup then said: “Kids always make a huge fuss out of the small things, it should be resolved soon!” He smiled awkwardly as he spoke.

‘Ye Wei was Master Yi’s only legacy apprentice! If this engagement worked out we’d be protected by the Runemaster, even the Big Three would fear us... How stupid is little Yin? Why didn’t she tell me she messed up?!’ Joe Patriarch’s eyes darted around as his mind wandered.

‘Make a fuss out of small things?’ Ye Zheng Qing was not happy with how the Joe’s reacted during the Du family’s campaign, but he was able to be the bigger man because he thought Joe Yin was close to the hero of the hour. But now that did not seem to be the case, there was no reason to be nice to the Joe family.

“Dragons don’t associate with snakes, that’s a good one!” Ye Zheng Qing said in a cold sarcastic tone.

The Ye Patriarch’s words made Joe Zheng Feng feel increasingly embarrassed and uneasy, his face was red as a tomato.

Joe Wan could see how bothered Ye Wei was from his posture. The

slow steps he took and how he kept his head down as he walked out. The enthusiasm she had earlier disappeared from her eyes. Although, she is related to the Joe family she is also Ye Wei's mother. The moment her son revealed the details, she forgot about the engagement and started siding with him.

“Joe Patriarch, excuse me!” Ye Yi too wanted to leave the scene. He was there when his son told him about his red Sentient, he knew exactly how vulnerable Ye Wei was. To Ye Yi and Joe Wan, what Joe Yin did to their son was intolerable.

Their son's wish was clear therefore they had no business here. They weren't worried about his future, Master Yi's legacy apprentice deserves better.

Aunt Jing Jing was known for her bad temper and caring for the youngsters, she stood up and grunted while staring at Joe Yin. It would have been less traumatizing if the insults came from a stranger, but she knew Ye Wei had been looking after and cared for Joe Yin since he could walk. Ye Jing Jing realized she did not pay enough attention to Ye Wei. ‘Only if I had spent more time to talk to him, it could have avoided him getting hurt...’

Following Jing Jing's lead, the rest of the Ye's left their seats quietly.

“For goodness sake!” Joe Zheng Feng trembled in anger under the social pressure, he shouted at Joe Yin: “What were you thinking? Apologise to them now!”

“Brother Ye, kids say silly things all the time, don't take this too

personal.” After shouting at Joe Yin, the Joe Patriarch spoke to Ye Zheng Qing in an apologetic tone.

“Don’t be silly, you are thinking too much. Why would I take children’s words seriously?” The Ye Patriarch sounded diplomatic, but his cold facial expression told another story; the recent developments showed him the darker sides of the Joe’s they were too opportunistic and manipulative.

“It’s getting late, and I’m not young and energetic like I used to be! Ye Hai, do you want to show the Joe’s the way out?” The Ye Patriarch stood up and faked a yawn.

“Sure, dad!”

Ye Hai stood up, “Uncle Joe, this way.” He said indifferently.

‘Drop the act...’ Joe Zheng Feng felt extremely bitter, not only did the Joe’s get embarrassed from the proposal. He was pretty sure the Ye family wouldn’t be interested in doing any kind of business with him.

A relationship that spanned through generations came to an end today. When the words from today spread, the Joe’s will become the laughingstock of the city.

Chapter 51 – Return To South Star

Ye Hai sullenly escorted the Joe's out of the mansion.

Joe Yin emotionlessly followed while staring at the floor as her mind wandered.

Anger? Yes, but here was no sign of tiredness on Ye Zheng Qing's face as he conversed with his sons and daughter.

“When The Du’s were at war with us, the Joe family did not help us one bit. It is understandable they don’t want trouble with the Big Three...” The patriarch was an understanding man. “But it’s obvious they just want to use little Wei for their own advantage; that is just disrespectful!”

“And that girl! She abandoned my grandson when he was going through hard times! I can’t imagine what kind of parents would put values like that in their kids head!?” Ye Zheng Qing tightened his grip as he exclaimed, the jade teacup in his hand turned into dust.

Ye Hai let out a long, disappointed sigh and said, “That is pretty cold-blooded, even for a kid!”

“From now on our family will not be affiliated with the Joe family!” Ye Zheng Qing said with determination.

“Dragons don’t associate with snakes? Who the hell did she think she was?” Said the angry aunt, Ye Jing Jing, who was bold enough to stand

up against the Du family, if Joe Yin didn't look so regretful, she would have slapped her right in the face.

"Terminate all the deals we have with the Joe's!" With compensation on the way and their newfound reputation, Ye Zheng Qing did not need the Joe's anymore; he would rather work with people he trusted.

Outside Ye Zhong's room stood Ye Wei looking at the clear blue sky.

"I will prove myself with actions. I'm not going to let my rune consonance drag me down! If Master Yi thinks I am good enough to be his apprentice, then there must be a way for me to improve. I will shut everyone up, and all the people who insulted me will be proven wrong!"

The countless insults Ye Wei received throughout the three years at South Star Academy strengthened his mind enormously. He was a lot more mature than the other kids of his age due to the constant bullying.

His youthful face looked incredibly confident. Apart from getting accepted by Master Yi, Ye Wei's quick progress also played an important role in him improving his self-esteem. Being a four star Student was not that impressive, but his fast speed of improvement due to the original Falling Star form he discovered and the Fiery Sun Quencher pills he was given, Ye Wei had an advantage over others his age.

On top of that, the dense cosmic energy Ye Wei received while refining the White Tiger's Assault gave him strength that other four star Students could not match. Now, he could probably take down an ordinary five star Student in real combat.

In the next few days, Ye Wei trained non-stop next door to his cousin's sick bed; Ye Zheng Qing arranged a three days feast which welcomed guests to celebrate with them the end of their family's crisis and Ye Wei becoming Master Yi's legacy apprentice.

While the big families were there feasting in the mansion, the Ye's took the chance to ask if any of the guests knew anybody who might have Welkin Leaves in their possession. But despite their effort, they got no news regarding the rare herb.

The school holiday passed by in a flash and before packing up for the return to South Star Academy Ye Wei passed the original Falling Star form to the Ye Patriarch.

The patriarch was stunned by Ye Wei's discovery. Although they were struck by the Du family, the Ye family obtained more than a million silver and gained a high Myst level formula. With that kind of resource, the family would soon become drastically stronger.

When Ye Wei was asked how he got his hands on the perfect Falling Star form, he mentioned Master Yi's name which stopped Ye Zheng Qing from questioning further.

There was another thing Ye Wei wanted to do before leaving.

“Cousin Zhong... I have to return to South Star Academy soon.” He stood in Ye Zhong's room with a heavy heart. Ye Wei carefully wiped the sweat off Ye Zhong's pale face with a warm towel. Scenes of the cousins' time together kept replaying in his head as he took care of the unconscious patient.

“I’m not strong enough right now, but when I become a Runemaster, I will take this matter into my own hands, and you will be avenged!” Ye Wei swore with a fiery spirit.

“Master Yi is searching for Welkin Leaves, and if anyone in Green Moon City has the herb, I’m sure master will retrieve it for us. Although he looks sketchy and dirty, he is a strong man who we can trust.” Ye Wei spoke solemnly, hoping his cousin could somehow hear him.

“It’s late; I should get going.” There was a hint of tears in Ye Wei’s eyes. He adjusted and straightened Ye Zhong’s blanket and left the room with his head lowered.

‘Unfortunately, obtaining them was easier said than done, Welkin leaves are simply too rare. Their rarity means Master Yi’s influence would not make the search any easier. Even if he managed to get ahold of some and wake up cousin Zhong, a full recovery of his Sentient is not guaranteed. If his Sentient didn’t fully recover would cousin Zhong be able to accept that...’ Ye Wei was distracted by the countless possibilities.

“I will do everything I can to help your recovery cousin Zhong, and I will find a way to fix your Sentient!” Ye Wei looked at Ye Zhong as he mumbled and closed the door.

Ye Wei then returned to his room to finish packing. With the help of some guards, he loaded his luggage into the horse carriage and left for South Star Academy soon after.

Ye Zheng Qing wanted Ye Wei to take the quicker and more

comfortable beast carriage back to school because a legacy apprentice deserved a bit of luxury, especially now that Ye family was financially secure. The Ye Patriarch could afford to get Ye Wei a new beast carriage.

However, Ye Wei turned it down. He didn't want to be too flashy and draw too much attention, so he opted for an ordinary horse carriage.

South Star Academy students were mostly from ordinary families. Martial families preferred home education as they usually had an established system to train the youngsters, unless it was an unusual circumstance.

In Ye Wei's case, he had to go to South Star Academy because the Ye family's system would not work on someone with a red Sentient; for Joe Yin, the Joe family's system was too rough and physical for girls.

And all the other marital families' children and talented South Star students were there under the same instruction: "Learn the Pole Star Finger!".

Only three powers had possession of high level Myst stance in Green Moon City; they were the City Lord, Master Yi, and South Star Academy.

The City Lord's Myst stance was passed down from the Zhou Dynasty under the strict order directly from the royal family that it shall never be taught to outsiders; Master Yi's Myst stance was passed down from the Holy Conservatory, and he would only teach it to his legacy apprentice.

The only way for a civilian to learn a Myst stance was through South

Star Academy. The founder of South Star created the stance in his youth. Every top ranked students had one chance to challenge the Emerald Flaming Maze, and the stance was passed down to whoever could get through the gauntlet perfectly. In the recent decades only a handful of student overcame the challenge and got their hands on this powerful stance.

“Thank you! You can just drop me off here!” Ye Wei got off the carriage and gave the coachman a nice handful of silver.

“Greatly appreciated!” The coachman smiled and respectfully bowed towards Ye Wei. With the generous tip, he would buy a bottle of fine rice wine at The Drunken Hermit when he got off work. ‘Unbelievable! Even with this kind of fame, little Wei is still so caring and kind!’ The Ye family’s uprising made the Ye mansion as busy as a marketplace, to the point where people from martial families were even starting to bribe the Ye’s servants for inside information.

The students at South Star had not seen each other for a whole week, and a lot of them were excited to see each other again, so they had stayed at the school gate to chat and catch up.

Ye Wei was only carrying two hand size suitcases, which allowed him to slip through groups of students without anyone noticing. He then followed the crowded path back to his room.

All classes had a mandatory meeting on the evening students return from their break. Ye Wei’s plan was to finish unpacking his room and tidy up before heading to the meeting; however, after seeing the state of his room, his plans were going to have to change. As he stepped foot through the door and looked around him, he became furious. His fists

were clenched, and his knuckles cracked.

The table was in pieces, and the floor was covered by ripped clothes. His blanket and bed stank pungently of piss.

‘Who did this!?’ Ye Wei said fumingly.

‘Was it Xiao Qi?’ The first person he suspected was the infamous class bully. ‘No... no, It can’t be him, he stopped being irritating to me ever since I answered those questions correctly in Yi Yan’s lecture. He doesn’t have the courage to come after me. But I don’t see who else would do it!’ He was convinced Xiao Qi was guilty, or at least had something to do with the vandalism.

‘Whoever you are, I will make you pay!’ Ye Wei was not in the best mood. If he wanted it his way, he would have stayed by Ye Zhong’s side until he heard from Master Yi, Lin Zi Yan, or anyone to bring news about the Welkin Leaves.

Ye Wei took a deep breath then left his room.

Ye Wei slammed the classroom door open only to find out Xiao Qi was not there.

The students from martial families were wealthy, and they usually went out together for food at a random restaurant close to the academy, whereas the students from ordinary families would stay in the classroom and chat.

With both his parents working at the academy as senior instructors, Xiao Qi was probably enjoying a cage of dim sum with his friends.

Chapter 52 – Conflict

“What now?” The less privileged students in the classroom had their eyes set on Ye Wei, some of them were happy for him, but most of them were rejoicing when they heard of his misfortune and then were jealous of his recent fame.

Ye Wei was the punching bag of junior class three, whoever was having a bad day would lash out at him verbally and sometimes even physically. Being at the bottom of the class, that kind of bullying was not justified, but it was common; his classmates would look the other way and talk about it during breaks.

Who would have thought that this one star Student had the potential to become a Runemaster? Some of Ye Wei’s classmates were happy that he finally got out of the toxic cycle of being bullied while the others were envious that Lin Zi Yan was on his side since he showcased his newfound talent. Some people can’t be happy about the good fortune of others.

The rest just liked the drama. They looked forward to what the tutor had to say about how Ye Wei skipped school for three days in a row, and if Du Ming Ze was going to continue bullying him now that school was starting again.

At this time, only the upper class and martial families had heard about what happened in the Ye family arena a few days ago. The vast majority of South Star students were oblivious of the duel, and how even the Du Patriarch was afraid to cross Ye Wei now. They thought the Du family was still what they were before the break.

“Ye Wei skipped school three days in a row! Xiao Qi is definitely going to bring it up during the class meeting and make it sound worse than it is. I wonder what his punishment will be!”

“But he is Lin Zi Yan’s pet now. I don’t think he will be punished that much. He will probably just get detention or something like that. Du Ming Ze might give him a rough time though!”

“He brought it onto himself, all he did was answered a couple of questions correctly. Do you really think he will get lucky again? The monthly assessment is in two weeks, and he is still a one star Student! Ha ha! I look forward to seeing him getting the worst grade again!”

The quiet gossip continued as the class was hesitant to tease him openly, but they couldn’t wait to see how the drama was going to unfold and laugh at him when everything goes south.

Cao Ning waved, “Ye Wei! Come over here!” He was worried sick. Having sat next to Ye Wei in class for years, he was one of the few real friends Ye Wei had.

When Du Ming Ze and his little gang raided Ye Wei’s room, Cao Ning was close by Ye Wei’s dormitory, so he saw them entering Ye Wei’s room and heard the noise they made.

“What’s up?” Ye Wei hid his anger and replied with a casual smile. He walked to his seat and sat himself down, slightly confused about Cao Ning’s anxious tone. Ye Wei saw Cao Ning as his closest friend in class; he was not going to let his negative emotions affect their friendship.

“How can you be smiling?” Cao Ning covered his earnest face with his hand frustrated by Ye Wei’s carefree attitude.

“What’s up? We’re having a class meeting soon that’s what!” Cao Ning was struggling to empathize with Ye Wei as he continued to rant in a serious tone, “You know about our class tutor’s temper! You skipped school without telling anyone, three whole days! Do you think he will let you off?”

Cao Ning was a bit grouchy from having nothing but studying and training on his schedule for the past few days. His eyes were slightly bloodshot from the lack of sleep. “The monthly assessment is in two weeks, and you’re skipping school while we were preparing for it during class! Miss Zi Yan saw something in you from what I could see... Aren’t you afraid to let her down? What would she think if you came in last again.”

““Oh! About that...” Ye Wei rubbed his nose and replied with an awkward smile. He had completely forgotten about it.

The assessment was split into three parts. Part one was a rune knowledge test. Part two was a cultivation level check, and part three was a real combat test. Thinking about it, Ye Wei was not worried about any aspects of the assessment. He passed Master Yi’s written exam with a perfect score. He couldn’t yet compete with the other gifted kids of his age due to his late start, but his four star cultivation was more than impressive when stacked up against everyone else in his class. Furthermore, Ye Wei’s body had been strengthened by cosmic energy, the high Myst level cultivation formula, and Fiery Sun Quencher pills. He didn’t know it yet, but he could probably beat a five star Student in a duel.

Cao Ning patted Ye Wei's shoulder and said, "It is pretty tight, but you still have two weeks, you should start caring about it! Miss Zi Yan knows about your situation. I don't think she expects you to do that well, but at least don't come in last. You could really use a teacher on your side right now!" Ye Wei had a moment of clarity, but Cao Ning misinterpreted his facial expression as a blank out due to panic.

"Coming in last?" Ye Wei smiled bitterly. He was agitated by the frustrating memories of coming last throughout the three years he was at South Star Academy. 'It won't happen again...' He thought.

"And..." Cao Ning scanned the room to make sure nobody was eavesdropping as he pulled Ye Wei close to him then continued in a whisper, "You have to avoid Du Ming Ze at all costs. He came looking for you with a gang of friends from his senior class. I don't think they had good intentions. When they couldn't find you in our classroom, he went to your room!" The worry on Cao Ning's face looked sincere.

In Cao Ning's mind, he thought that for Ye Wei neither how well he did in the assessment or minimizing his punishment was an urgent matter compared to his dispute with Du Ming Ze. Because this dispute could potentially destroy his social life at South Star and get him severely hurt.

"If you can't stand it, just head home. You can train with your family instead where you will be safe!" Cao Ning bit his lips as he suggested. He didn't want anything bad to happen to Ye Wei. The two were each other's only real friends in South Star Academy, and Cao Ning could not help solve this problem, therefore, he wanted to at least try to persuade him.

“Du Ming Ze?” Ye Wei asked with a cold glare. Having to think about the Du’s, Ye Wei started to get fired up. ‘A Du would have the guts...’

“But Xiao Qi volunteered to help; he led them to your room!” Cao Ning continued whispering.

“Xiao Qi and Du Ming Ze... I see!” All the puzzle pieces suddenly started to come together. ‘The coward found a bully to help him!’

Right as Cao Ning was going to tell Ye Wei not to cause any trouble, the classroom door was kicked open. Xiao Qi stomped in with a swagger and the gossip instantly died down while the brown-nosers greeted him. Being the number one student of the class gained him some respect from both teachers and students. He was often assigned to help discipline the class during breaks and therefore every student feared and obeyed him.

Since Ye Wei’s show of talent, the atmosphere in junior three had changed slightly. The class feared his strength more than they respected him as a person. They would not side with Xiao Qi if he decided to say or do anything to Ye Wei.

“Ye Wei!” Xiao Qi scanned the whole classroom with his eyes, feeling superior as his classmates nodded at him and avoiding eye contact out of fear. He was going to start bullying again thinking Du Ming Ze was on his side.

“Only you are dumb enough to provoke Du Ming Ze. How do you like the new decor?” Xiao Qi said in a sadistic tone as he walked towards Ye Wei’s seat. “And, you are also the only person dumb enough to skip school three days in a row! How dare you disrespect our teachers and the

school rules!"

"As the prefect, I will make sure our tutor hears about this!" Xiao Qi stood next to Ye Wei, looked down at him and chuckling.

Ye Wei frowned, he was finding it hard to control the anger within as he darted his angry eyes on Xiao Qi. The moment before Ye Wei was going to stand up, Cao Ning pulled his sleeve and tried to convey to him the message, 'Without Miss Zi Yan in the classroom, you are in no position to challenge Xiao Qi! He is a five star Student! Ye Wei you rascal!"

"It will be fine!" Said Ye Wei as he shook Cao Ning's hand off his sleeve. He patted Cao Ning's shoulder and slowly stood up to stare Xiao Qi straight in the eyes.

"Xiao Qi, did you lead Du Ming Ze and his dogs to trash my room?" Ye Wei asked calmly in an interrogative tone.

"As I said, you deserved it. You shouldn't have offended Du Ming Ze!" Xiao Qi grunted coldly and answered by not denying it.

The tension built up as the pair refused to stop staring at each other. The whole class was nervous, and they didn't know who to root for. They didn't know if they should notify the teachers either. The class prefect nor the potential Runemaster wanted to back down.

"Ye Wei has changed a lot... Nobody talks to Xiao Qi like that! It would be foolish if he started a fight though, his runic knowledge won't do him

any good in a fist fight!"

"Xiao Qi wouldn't start a fight, right? In the case, Ye Wei does become a Runemaster in the future... And Miss Zi Yan might have something to say about it too!"

"Have you forgotten about Du Ming Ze? He is from one of the Big Three and seemed to be pretty close to Xiao Qi from the last time he came to our classroom."

The gossip started again as the room was becoming too quiet and the atmosphere got heavier.

Chapter 53 – Martial Families

“Just answer me, did you lead Du Ming Ze to my room?” Ye Wei’s glare was intense and cold as he narrowed his eyes then slowly clenched his fists. He looked ready to fight.

“Oh, what is this? Do you want to fight me?” Xiao Qi saw Ye Wei’s fists and said jokingly in a mocking tone. He was not afraid of a one star Student who answered a few of questions correctly during class. “You assume correctly! I did lead Du Ming Ze to trash your room! You’re lucky you weren’t there, otherwise you too would have been trashed!”

There were not a lot of things Xiao Qi enjoyed more than mouthing off to people inferior to himself.

“What if I told you that it was me who led them there? Will you do something with those fists, or are they just for show?” Xiao Qi’s arrogant smile grew bigger.

“Ye Wei don’t let your emotions get the better of you.” Cao Ning was afraid that Ye Wei was going to fall for the insults and taunts, and he attempted to hold him back again.

If Ye Wei started the fight, Xiao Qi would be blameless and get off the hook by claiming he fought in self-defense.

Cao Ning reached for Ye Wei’s arm but he grabbed nothing but air, and before he could finish his sentence Ye Wei had already launched himself towards Xiao Qi.

“Sh*t!” Cao Ning’s face turned pale, and he could do nothing but watch.

The class was staring at Ye Wei surprised that he would fall for Xiao Qi’s taunts, and they were even more surprised by his decision to fight someone much stronger than he was.

“Ha, I was afraid you would never come at me!” Xiao Qi’s lips curled into a prideful sneer. He took a step forward with a heavy stomp and channeled his Qi. A green metallic glow shone under his skin as his Qi flowed through, hardening his body from head to toe.

Xiao Qi threw a punch, and it cut through the air creating a shrill piercing sound.

A small whirlwind violently spread throughout the whole room from Xiao Qi’s punch. The pressure tilted the tables and pushed over the books set atop.

Xiao Qi did not hold anything back; he showed off his full strength, the strength of the five star Student that junior three feared.

Cao Ning’s eyes were closed. He shut his eyelids the moment Xiao Qi threw the punch as he did not want to see his best friend get hurt and suffer.

The rest of the class too simultaneously looked away. They were aware that Xiao Qi mercilessly gave this punch his all and that it was going to

break some bones. They thought there was nothing Ye Wei could do to avoid the bloodshed from happening, therefore, they looked away.

On the other hand, there was no trace of panic on Ye Wei's face. He was terrifyingly calm. He saw through the mind games Xiao Qi tried to play and was ready to confront him physically and mentally.

Ye Wei channeled his Qi, and his bones and muscles surged with strength. With the momentum of his whole body, he answered Xiao Qi's strike with a punch of his own.

Ye Wei's Qi was condensed from cosmic energy, the Fiery Sun Quencher pill, and that golden flash in his Sentient; his fist and the rest of his skin were covered in a soft fire red glow decorated by dots of golden light where his meridian lay.

The red fist and the green fist met in mid-air, and they collided together like two pieces of solid steel. The collision created a shower of sparks and a force wave that knocked over all tables and chairs within two meters from the point of impact.

“How is this possible?!” Xiao Qi's full-powered punch was stopped by Ye Wei's counterpunch, neither of them gaining an inch. He stared at Ye Wei's fist, and his eyes widened in shock. ‘When did this idiot become this strong?’

“I thought you were the strongest in our class?” While holding his fist against Xiao Qi's, Ye Wei grunted. His right fist traveled from his waist to his opponent's abdomen at lightning like speed akin to a venomous snake striking its prey.

Xiao Qi's body bent backwards, and his organs were pressed together by Ye Wei's powerful right hook. Within seconds, he was overwhelmed by pain. Stomach acid gushed out from Xiao Qi's mouth, and his eyes widened as Ye Wei's fist dug deeper into his abdomen.

Xiao Qi's strength was drained by the pain. His punch weakened, and his fist dropped. He just couldn't hold his arm up.

Ye Wei seized the window of opportunity as he followed through with a left punch and landed it on Xiao Qi's jaw. The left cross knocked Xiao Qi over, and his body fell on and smashed the chair behind him.

After the noise had died down, everyone turned their heads back to see the damage Xiao Qi did, only to find him on the ground! They froze in shock with their eyes and mouths wide open. 'What just happened? What is Xiao Qi doing on the floor?'

The surprise and confusion on everyone's faces couldn't even come close to how startles Xiao Qi felt. He could not believe he was knocked down by this one star Student. With red eyes, Xiao Qi stared at Ye Wei like a bloodthirsty beast hunting his prey as he shouted, "Ye Wei! I will kill you!"

Xiao Qi hair was disheveled, and his jaw was bruised. He struggled to get up from the floor like a newborn deer. 'I was careless! I am the strongest student in junior three, and he is just a one star rubbish!' Fuming in shame and anger, Xiao Qi was deep in denial. He refused to think about what just happened and instead gave himself an excuse.

‘He humiliated me with a sucker punch in front of everyone!’ The thought rapidly grew in Xiao Qi’s head as he completely lost his cool. He roared with rage then dashed at Ye Wei. Xiao Qi needed to prove to everyone, and himself, that he was the best in class.

Ye Wei just calmly stood still and curled his lips into a smile. He was more entertained than threatened by the person in front of him who looked like an angry clown.

Though Ye Wei was irritated by Xiao Qi’s attitude, he wanted to get even and teach the corrupt class prefect a lesson about respect. He slowly clenched his fist, ‘In the past Xiao Qi has abused his power to bully others, and it had gotten way of control; this time he tagged along with Du Ming Ze to trash my room. If I don’t stop him what’s next? And who will be the victim?’ The more Ye Wei thought about it, the angrier he got.

“Xiao Qi! Are you out of your mind?” While Xiao Qi was dashing towards Ye Wei, three well-dressed teenagers entered the classroom.

These junior three students were from martial families. Two of them were four star Students, and the last one was a three star Student.

They saw the mess as they stepped into the classroom, and the moment they identified who the brawlers were they shouted at Xiao Qi simultaneously. “Xiao Qi, who do you think you are? You have no idea who are you messing with!” The three teenagers were fully aware of Ye Wei’s relationship with Master Yi.

Chapter 54 – Punishment

The three teenagers' screams startled Xiao Qi, and before he knew it the three ran in front of Ye Wei shielding him from Xiao Qi.

The trio nodded at Ye Wei, signaling that they were friends not foes. They then turned to stare at Xiao Qi and coldly shouted, “Don’t worry, we won’t let Xiao Qi touch a hair on your head!”

These three were talented individuals, and they were in junior three only because of their sloppiness and that they were too lazy to train. Although they weren’t the top students of the class, their family backgrounds made their classmates respect them. They were close to Xiao Qi and often hung out together.

The three martial family teenagers on their own were a little social group. There was an aura of snobbiness around them. It’s not that they were bad people, but they just didn’t think they would gain anything by associating with ordinary students, nor did they see a point hanging out with Ye Wei before now because of his horrible red Sentient.

Seeing that those three were protecting Ye Wei, the class was again confused. They could not figure out what happened to cause the three teenagers to not side with their friend, but instead defend Ye Wei.

But for the trio, it was clear. Unlike the others in junior three, they received the information regarding the family showdown very shortly after it happened. As a matter of fact, they were just discussing how to befriend Master Yi’s new legacy apprentice. Now that Xiao Qi served this

opportunity on a silver platter to them there was no way the trio would let this chance slip by.

“What? You three are going to fight me too?” Xiao Qi’s bloodshot eyes were fixed on the trio who stood in front of Ye Wei and sternly shouted, “If you three do not already know, Ye Wei has offended Du Ming Ze, from the Du family! You don’t want them after you!”

After Xiao Qi’s statement, the trio showed no sign of standing down. Not aware there were bigger things in play, Xiao Qi was clouded by frustration wondering why they would help Ye Wei.

‘These guys are from martial families, but none of them are half as well established as the Du family, what the hell has gotten into them?’

“The Du family? Haha.” The trio looked at each other then contemptuously sneered at Xiao Qi’s naivety and lack of exposure. To them, the Du family were the losers who got humiliated by Master Yi during a failed plot against the Ye’s, and after which they were forced to pay a million silver in compensation as an apology.

“Xiao Qi, don’t try to threaten us with Du Ming Ze’s name. Even if he personally came here, we would still stand our ground! We won’t let anyone touch a hair on Ye Wei’s head!” They were acting as guardian like as they could.

Seeing the scene, Ye Wei shook his head reluctantly. He was aware what the trio’s real intentions were.

Although Ye Wei was slightly put off by the intentions of this unnecessary attempt of intervention, he didn't say anything as one should never decline help.

“You guys! You will regret this!” Xiao Qi clenched his fists, as he coldly stared at the trio, then fixed his eyes on Ye Wei as he made his threatening speech.

Protected by three determined bodyguards, Xiao Qi could not do anything to Ye Wei but intimidate him.

“Skipping school three days in a row, starting fights in the classroom, and harming a student’s body! These are flagrant violations of school rules! When the tutors get here, I will see how you three can protect this idiot!” Xiao Qi grunted and said as he rubbed his stomach, it was still hurting from their exchange of blows.

After looking around at the messy classroom, Xiao Qi limped back to his seat, sat down, and hoped the class tutor would arrive soon.

“Ye Wei! Are you hurt?” The trio had better things to worry about, they ignored Xiao Qi’s threat and continued fawning over Master Yi’s legacy apprentice. They knew nobody, not even the principle, would do anything to the Runemaster or his associates.

“I am fine. Thanks for the help!” Ye Wei shook his head to signal he was fine, and politely expressed his gratitude although he knew they were doing it for potential personal gain.

Seeing that Ye Wei did not talk more, the trio was afraid they were intruding on his personal space, therefore they bowed then quietly went to their seats.

“Hey, I am fine! I’m strong enough now. I don’t start fights, but I am not afraid to confront unfairness!” Ye Wei could see his best friend was still trembling, so he patted Cao Ning’s shoulder and spoke in a comforting manner.

Cao Ning was by no means untalented. He was a three star Student, and his civilian family upbringing made him an honest boy, but also a timid one.

This did not escape the martial family boys as they looked at each other. It seemed that if they wanted to be close to Ye Wei, they might have to befriend Cao Ning too.

“Yea!” Cao Ning nodded then replied. He was calmed by Ye Wei’s trustworthy aura, and he could sense there was something different about his best friend.

It wasn’t snobbiness from showing off his potential to become a Runemaster or Miss Zi Yan’s high regards. It was a deeper temperament; a transformation.

Time passed, and the sky darkened. Junior three’s classroom was almost full. The mess made earlier remained, and Xiao Qi pressured his classmates not to touch a thing so he could present it as an evidence of Ye Wei’s alleged crimes.

“The class will be a witness to you skipping school and starting a fight. This mess will be the proof of your violent acts! You can get severely punished for violating either of these rules, and I will see if you can keep calm when our tutor comes!” Xiao Qi’s face was ashen while he clenched his fist tight. He spoke to the class while staring at Ye Wei, who was sitting relaxed.

The class was casually looking at Ye Wei as they spoke about what happened in the classroom earlier. They too were curious about how their tutor was going to handle this outlaw.

There had been a lot of strange events happening today in junior three’s classroom. First it was Ye Wei actually standing up against Xiao Qi and knocking him to the ground. Secondly, the martial family boys sided with Ye Wei instead of their usual ally. The class knew way too little to make sense out of these episodes!

They anticipated an explanation for when the tutor confronted all the participants of the fight that happened earlier. Usually, the tutor would arrive in the classroom before the scheduled meeting starts to catch up with the students.

However, it was not before an hour past the scheduled time before the sweaty tutor showed up panting. He was wearing the standard issue black robe and looked suspiciously concerned about something.

This was the moment the class has been waiting for! As the chubby tutor entered, thirty pairs of eyes immediately set on him.

Chapter 55 – Gifted

“Huh?” Before the tutor’s eyes was a messy, hardly recognizable classroom. It was obvious a fight took place not long ago. He noticed that he was the focus of the whole class’ eyes. He slightly frowned letting the class know he was displeased.

“The Tutor is going to lose it!”

‘Oh god, Xiao Qi is going to make it sound way worse than it really was. Ye Wei is in deep trouble!’ The students thought while looking at their tutor’s ashened face, but they were all too timid to speak up.

“Ha! Nobody can help you this time Ye Wei!” Xiao Qi was glad to see the tutor’s angry face, thinking Ye Wei’s punishment would be exceptionally heavy.

Seeing that the tutor was going as ask who was responsible for the mess, Xiao Qi adjusted his shirt and rehearsed the allegations in his head. He was ready to report Ye Wei’s crimes in detail, that may not be completely accurate.

Xiao Qi was impatiently waiting but the tutor did not ask anything about the mess. The class tutor’s eyes stayed on the broken tables and chairs for merely a second before he shifted his attention to Ye Wei.

The chubby tutor respectfully looked at Ye Wei and approvingly nodded.

He did not like the state of the room and he did not know Ye Wei was responsible for it. But he knew he was looking at Master Yi's legacy apprentice and could not wait to show respect.

The reason why he was late to the class meeting was that he was held up in another meeting, a meeting with the administrators of South Star Academy. There he learned that Ye Wei had been recruited by the renowned Runemaster, Master Yi.

“Tutor!” Xiao Qi was tired of waiting for the tutor to ask the question, so he enthusiastically stood up while coldly staring at Ye Wei.

“Not only did Ye Wei defiantly skipped school for three days in a row, but he attacked me from my blind spot with a sucker punch in this very room! He broke the school rules! Please serve justice!”

“The whole class is my alibi!” With his twisted sense of right and wrong, Xiao Qi presented his claims. His stomach was still hurting, but his mind felt eased. He was sure the tutor would avenge him swiftly and forcefully.

The tutor of junior three was known to be bad tempered. In the past, even when Xiao Qi and the martial boys broke a less serious school rule, this man would still punish them as if they committed serious offences. He did this to make an example of them and to make sure they didn't do it again.

“Skipping school? And he attacked you?” The tutor confusingly looked at Xiao Qi, his eyebrows curled up as he frowned. Then he madly replied

to Xiao Qi with a few questions, “Xiao Qi, you are the strongest student in this class, the one and only five star Student! And Ye Wei? Who doesn’t know that he is a one star Student? He attacked you?”

“You have let me down!”

“You insult me with your lies! Don’t you have better things to spend your time on, other than lying?”

The tutor’s scolding echoed in the classroom and it startled Xiao Qi and the rest of the class. They were very confused why the tutor would take Ye Wei’s side before further investigation. They all knew that Ye Wei skipped school for three days. This favoritism was very much uncalled for.

Xiao Qi couldn’t believe the strict class tutor favored Ye Wei, he paused his pursuit.

“But even if he couldn’t or didn’t attack me, he still skipped school for three whole days! If you don’t believe me, you can ask the substitute teacher!” Xiao Qi grinded his teeth after he spoke as he was not comfortable being the victim of unfair treatment.

The day was getting weirder and weirder for everyone, they just didn’t understand why everyone seemed to be favouring Ye Wei!

Xiao Qi’s mind was full of resentment and unwillingness. He couldn’t let this go without making Ye Wei suffer! ‘The evidence is right here! The proof of Ye Wei’s offence was the classroom, itself! Even if the tutor

favoured Ye Wei, there is no escape for this class skipping rascal.’

“The act of skipping school for three days is not always against the rules now, is it? The tutor calmly stared at Xiao Qi as his face darkened.

He was annoyed by Xiao Qi. ‘Ye Wei is Master Yi’s one and only legacy apprentice, and even people as high up as the principle and the vice principal have to pay Master Yi respect!’

‘Xiao Qi you little brat, why would I look for trouble on your behalf?’

As the tutor’s mind wandered, the class was still completely lost while trying to understand the situation. It was a written rule that students at South Star Academy are not allowed to skip school but Ye Wei skipped three days. Ye Wei had been bullied in the past, but that should not exclude him from being the subject of the school’s discipline policies!

Xiao Qi looked irritated and the rest of the class looked puzzled. Everyone that is, but the three martial family boys, they were secretly chuckling as they could guess why the tutor was behaving this way. ‘Haha, why would a junior class tutor dare punish Master Yi’s apprentice? No tutors are in the position to do so!’

“South Star Academy has strict rules against class skipping, but that only applies to students in junior, intermediate, and senior class!”

“The school board has made a decision to reassign Ye Wei to the class of the gifted!” The tutor briefly gave Xiao Qi a cold look, then turned to Ye Wei and said with a friendly tone, “Let’s all congratulate Ye Wei”

“What!?”

“Ye Wei? Class of the gifted?”

The announcement bombarded Xiao Qi’s mind like thunder. He felt dizzy and struggled to breathe normally. ‘Ye Wei? Did I hear correctly? Since when is he qualified to be in that class?! He is a talentless one star Student!’

“A student in the class of the gifted can show up to lectures whenever they please, and this is one of the privileges Ye Wei has earned!” The tutor added.

The martial family boys were the first in the class to stand up, and they winked and bowed at Ye Wei, “Brother Ye, congratulations!”

“Gifted as you are it was only the matter of time before you got reassigned!”

“Ye Wei! Don’t forget about us although you won’t be among us!”

The rest of the class started cheering, “Congrats Ye Wei, you are our pride!” Ye Wei’s classmates were a bit confused as nobody knew the details yet, but the tutor’s words were enough. There was no reason to doubt what he said regarding Ye Wei being reassigned.

Nobody even cared about the pale and spaced out Xiao Qi at this point.

“Ye...Ye Wei! You really made it into the gifted class?!” Cao Ning’s eyes were widened as he disbelievingly staring at Ye Wei like an owl.

“Erm... Yea I guess so.” Ye Wei scratched his head and nodded. He realized now that the academy might have learned that he had become Master Yi’s legacy apprentice.

Chapter 56 – Dragon

After the class meeting, Ye Wei went back to his trashed room. He didn't unpack earlier so now he just picked up his luggage and a few belongings then followed the tutor to his new residence in the Crouching Dragon Hall under the dim moonlight.

The grounds at Crouching Dragon Hall were filled with trees, and the winding green stone pavement was calm and peaceful.

Now that Ye Wei had become a gifted class student, he had to say goodbye to his old room. All his classmates lived at either the Crouching Dragon Hall or Green Phoenix Hall depending on their gender.

The academy was not going to be stingy when it came to treating Master Yi's only legacy apprentice. They arranged an elegant little house for Ye Wei. It was a house like Lin Zi Yan's residence in Green Phoenix Hall!

Only the top three students in the whole academy were assigned these elegant houses apart from Lin Zi Yan and now Ye Wei.

“I always dreamed of having my own house here at South Star, but now not only am I moving into Crouching Dragon Hall, but I am also getting my own house!”

“Fate is a mysterious thing!” Ye Wei was looking at the luxuriously decorated interior while standing on a rare beast pelt as he exclaimed in awe.

“There are thirty-six students in my new class, and every one of them are astonishing cultivators. A few of them are even younger than I am, and some of them are Warriors! I have to breakthrough soon so I can compete with these people. I was at the bottom of junior three for three years, and I do not wish to be the worst again!”

“I have to become an elite and earn my position properly! It will be hard to catch up to my class, but I will do it!” Ye Wei rubbed his hand together as he tried to motivate himself. His eyes shone with determination.

“Though, I don’t think I will learn anything from class right now. I shouldn’t just tag along with the class and waste the tutor’s time because I’m not on the same level. It wouldn’t be fair to my new classmates, and it won’t be fair to the teachers who would have to pay attention to me just because of my apprenticeship with Master Yi!”

“I need to attain a seven star level before attending class. I will benefit more from training than attending class for now!” Ye Wei made the decision after pondering, he then marched up the engraved staircase into the training room on the second floor. He swallowed a Fiery Sun Quencher pill and started cultivating.

Ye Wei’s recent improvements didn’t change the color of his Sentient. He was still hopelessly slow at absorbing primal energy. If he were to train without any pills or outside help, he would not become a five star Student in less than three years at the least.

Quenchers were his only solution as of now, and he was using a lot of

them too. Ye Wei just wanted to get to seven star level as soon as he could. He actually had to thank the Du family, Zhou Wu and Dong Ho for the compensation money because with their financial support he did not have to worry about resources.

With extreme effort, Ye Wei took pill after pill and trained non-stop for seven days.

During this week, he consumed all the Fiery Sun Quenchers in his possession. This helped him gain two more layers of green web under his skin!

When he accumulated ten layers of this Qi web under his skin, then Ye Wei would breakthrough to become a five star Student.

“These pills were really effective... I can’t believe how much I have progressed in just a week; a breakthrough is almost in sight!” Ye Wei slowly opened his eyes and stood up from his lotus position. He clenched his fist and flexed his arm so that he could see the green web under his skin more clearly.

“It’s a shame that I don’t have any more Fiery Sun Quenchers. If I did, it wouldn’t take me more than one month to become a five star Student.”

“If only they weren’t that rare! Our family can afford them now but had to settle with lower quality pills because of availability.” Ye Wei shook his head and sighed reluctantly, unpleased with having to fall back to a slower cultivating speed.

‘I Wonder how Zi Yan is doing...’ After a few days of hard training, the elegant silhouette of Lin Zi Yan appeared in his mind.

Having lost track of time, Ye Wei looked out the window to discover the sun was setting. He stretched his body and went out for some fresh air.

He decided to follow the shaded trail and head towards Green Phoenix Hall. As Ye Wei got closer to the female’s hall of residence, he was joined by some familiar faces who were returning to the hall after a busy school day. They all were looking at him and talking about him quietly.

“Isn’t that the boy who was chasing after Joe Yin? How many times did he get humiliated by her? Why is he coming back?” A girl with braided hair asked her friends in a judgemental and disdainful tone. She was stopped by one of the girls from speaking further.

“Shuu! Have you not heard what everyone was saying?”

“Heard about what?”

“Do you live in a cave or something? Rumour has it that this boy has an outstanding Soul Sensibility and that he just became Master Yi’s legacy apprentice!” The leader of the group answered while admiringly staring at Ye Wei.

“What? How sure are you about that?” The girl with braids asked again disbelievingly. She would have never associated Master Yi with Ye Wei before now.

“I am very certain! He now has his own house at Crouching Dragon Hall, just like *that guy* !”

“Joe Yin is so lucky! If Joe Yin becomes his girlfriend, she will most likely receive special treatment too! Imagine if she got her own house at Green Phoenix!” The girl with braids showed a hint of envy.

After hearing that, the girls all had a sour look on their faces as they knew more regarding the situation.

“I heard Joe Yin’s father brought her to the Ye mansion for a wedding proposal and got rejected on the spot!” The leader of the group had good sources.

“Wow, I guess a boy with potential like him would aim higher not to mention all the times he has been humiliated by Joe Yin!”

“Why is he heading to Green Phoenix Hall then?”

“For Lin Zi Yan I guess. Her talents would be a good match for a future Runemaster!”

While the group was speculating, a better looking and therefore more confident girl decided to try her luck and took the initiative. She gently flicked her shoulder length hair as she approached Ye Wei.

She waved at him and showed a charming smile, “You’re Ye Wei right?”

Ye Wei's eyes locked on to the approaching girl. Her white silk dress complimented her body well, but it was lackluster compared to Lin Zi Yan's natural elegance. He replied coldly, "Yea that's me, can I help you with anything?"

The girl dismissed the cold reply and continued her pursuit with a shy smile: "A few of my friends and I would like to hang out with you, are you free?" She pointed at the group of pretty girls standing far behind her. They were all shyly looking in Ye Wei's direction and giggling.

"Sorry, I don't have time!" Ye Wei shook his head and directly replied. He walked past her without a second thought.

Ye Wei's reaction stupefied the group of girls.

"Who would have guessed that this red Sentient boy had it in him?"

"Joe Yin must really regret what she did to him now!"

Just behind the girls around the corner stood a girl with ear length hair. She was quietly watching Ye Wei walking towards Lin Zi Yan's house. Two lines of tears slid down her rosy cheeks as the group of girls talked about how she had missed her chance. Joe Yin saw Ye Wei on her way back from class, but she didn't even have the courage to say hello to him.

She regretted her actions dearly, but regret would not help her by now.

Chapter 57 – Sealed

An elegant fragrance struck Ye Wei as he entered Lin Zi Yan's front yard. Curious to find out what it was, he walked towards the mini flower garden to the side where the smell came from.

The source of the fragrance were purple tulips. They were surrounded by different exotic flowers. Ye Wei remembered seeing the same purple tulips embroidered on Lin Zi Yan's clothes and wondered what it represented.

Ye Wei took a deep breath and was refreshed by the sweet scent that reminded him of Zi Yan and her elegance.

He then turned around and looked up. The doors were shut, but Lin Zi Yan did once say that he was welcome to visit anytime. With that in mind, he walked up and gently knocked twice.

“What’s going on? Is she not home?” Ye Wei was puzzled because it was way after the last class of the day had ended.

All of a sudden a violent disturbance of Qi was felt by Ye Wei. He felt that it came from the second floor where her training room should be located. The wave hit him internally, and it disrupted both his Qi and blood circulation. The rusty taste of blood was in his mouth suddenly.

‘What was that? How come a Qi wave of that magnitude came from Zi Yan’s house?’

“She just became a Warrior less than a month ago. This is not something that came from Lin Zi Yan. These escalating violent Qi waves feel more like the clash of Qi in a battle!”

Afraid that Zi Yan was under attack, Ye Wei’s face turned ashen. He worryingly rushed towards the front door and tried to open it.

With a huge bang, the doors glowed. The runes inscribed onto the doors shone and repelled him. Ye Wei was knocked off balance and forced to take a few steps back.

These houses were secured by a runic system installed by the academy to stop unwanted persons from entering. Only authorized people could open the doors under normal circumstances.

Just like Ye Wei’s house over at Crouching Dragon Hall, without the correct combination of runes nobody below the condensed prime Warrior level could disarm the security system without the code.

Ye Wei started to panic. He could tell from the fearsome disturbance of Qi that was growing rapidly that it could turn the house into rubble if it was not stopped.

“What should I do?” Ye Wei frowned. He could not afford to lose Zi Yan.

‘This was not the time to hesitate!’

Ye Wei took a deep breath and stared at the doors. He remembered seeing Zi Yan opened this set of doors, and he tried to recall what exact she did on this very spot. He cleared his mind and followed his memory, Ye Wei placed his fingers onto the runes on the door and flicked them.

The doors made a clicking sound then opened up. “Yes!” Ye Wei screamed with joy. He felt lucky that his peripheral vision was accurate enough and that he could remember the code under stress.

He didn’t waste a second as he ran inside the room without even closing the doors.

It took merely a second for the four star Student to dash up the stairs. The closer he get to the training room, the more suffocated he felt. When he arrived in front of the training room, tides of pressure waves pressed against him so strongly he could hardly breathe. His body and mind were overwhelmed by the fearsome energy surge. He channeled his Qi to fight the outside pressure.

Although a bit scared, Ye Wei opened the training room doors without hesitation.

Expecting to see a fight, Ye Wei was shocked to see the massive Qi surge coming from a gentle figure. There was only one person in the room apart from himself, and it was Lin Zi Yan sitting in a lotus position. She was sitting quietly in the middle of a large carpet.

‘How can she generate energy of this magnitude?’ Ye Wei was first shocked by what was occurring in front of his eyes, and then his face flushed when he took a closer look.

Lin Zi Yan was wearing nothing but a thin silk gown. Damp with sweat; it was almost transparent. Ye Wei was embarrassed and surprised to see this. He couldn't move nor could he take his eyes off her.

Her flawless skin, her pale and delicate arms, the curves at her chest, the slender waistline, and the muscular but slim legs. Ye Wei could see that her body was a product of years of hard training, and his eyes were drawn by every bit of it.

He couldn't help himself; no young boy could either.

Ye Wei froze in confusion. He didn't know if he should leave this scene or not. It was clear that she was in some kind of trouble, but he was also sure that he walked in at a very private moment.

While Ye Wei was pondering, Lin Zi Yan's moan caught his attention. She looked like she was in great pain, and her slightly loose hair was drenched. Drops of sweat were dripping from the ends onto her body. Aroused by these drops of sweat running down her skin, Ye Wei's face turned completely red.

As Ye Wei was frozen by the sight, he considered how to apologize when Zi Yan opened her eyes and learned that he had been looking at her barely dressed figure. Suddenly, an intense wave of energy came from Lin Zi Yan's body and snapped him out of his daze.

Followed by the explosion of Qi, sequences of runes burst out of Lin Zi Yan's body and started spinning around her. Millions of runes merged in a long chain and formed a purple vortex.

The whirl of runes projected a violet runic pattern onto her. She didn't look human under the purple light.

After taking a closer look at the whirl, Ye Wei discovered that most of those runes contained massive amounts of energy, and were stronger than Myst stance runes!

It was a mystery to Ye Wei how and where Lin Zi Yan could store that many runes inside her body. This kind of energy would tear one's body apart if they were below the condensed prime Warrior level. But then a couple of strange looking runes caught Ye Wei's eyes. 'Those are dimensional runes! They are only used for sealing!'

It struck Ye Wei that Lin Zi Yan was either a vessel, or her power was being sealed by a sealing stance for some reason. That she was actually much stronger than people believed her to be.

The power surges coming through the seal were filtered and weakened. Ye Wei could not imagine what would happen if the seal was to be broken, how strong would she be.

It has long been apparent to Ye Wei that Lin Zi Yan's family background wasn't ordinary, but today was the first time he was scared and intimidated by it. It was becoming more obvious that she grew up around some very powerful people.

Ye Wei hadn't really known Lin Zi Yan for that long, but he opened his heart to her a little bit without noticing, 'To be strong enough to match her and protect her.', This had become his goal after Ye Wei started to get

to know the kind-hearted beauty.

This was a wake-up call. Ye Wei learned right now that he needed to multiply his efforts to reach his goals.

“I will not give up!” Ye Wei was determined although he had no idea how much catching up he would need to do.

The whirl did not stop revolving, it suddenly expanded and released an even stronger wave of energy akin a mini-tsunami.

Chapter 58 – Sorry

The fearsome wave of energy came crashing into Ye Wei, and he was knocked flying before he could react and defend himself although the result would have been the same. He was shocked by the impact and the next thing he knew, he was on the ground feeling like his organs were all twisted together.

Ye Wei quickly got up and swallowed a pill. He sat in a lotus position and adjusted his disturbed Qi flow.

‘What is happening? I don’t understand!’ Ye Wei was increasingly confused by Lin Zi Yan, who was sitting still with closed eyes.

Under great pain, Lin Zi Yan’s lovely facial features were all squeezed together. Ye Wei had never seen Zi Yan looking like this. He could not help but empathize with her as she was going through this agonizing experience.

Just as Ye Wei started breathing normally again, the whirl of runes contracted. They touched Lin Zi Yan’s skin and disappeared altogether, and the Qi waves vanished instantaneously as well.

While Ye Wei was relieved, Lin Zi Yan did not look like she was suffering any less. A small amount of blood leaked out of her mouth and slid down her pale chin. She then lost balance and fell over.

Lin Zi Yan’s fall did not go unnoticed by Ye Wei. He immediately stood up and ran over to hold her tightly as she fell.

Lin Zi Yan had no strength left in her body, and she struggled just to open her eyes. Her brain registered the familiar face then she asked in a low whispering voice, “Ye Wei why are you here? Am I dreaming?” Zi Yan was barely conscious and weakening as she spoke.

Ye Wei grabbed her arm and tried to feel her pulse. He realized it was weak, and it felt like it would stop at any second. ‘What should I do now?’

While feeling Lin Zi Yan’s pulse, Ye Wei noticed there was a fading marking on each of her wrists that resembled a runic seal. They were only one shade darker than her skin was and were hard to notice unless observed closely.

Ye Wei was trying to work out whether these marks had anything to do with what just happened to Lin Zi Yan while he carried her to lay on the little bed to the side.

Ye Wei was close enough to smell the sweat on Lin Zi Yan’s drenched silk gown; it was sticking onto her body, and he couldn’t help but trace the outline of her body with his eyes. From her perky breasts to her flat, smooth stomach and all the way down her toned legs, every inch of her skin was driving Ye Wei crazy, but he had much more serious matter to deal with, and he knew it.

He took out a meridian nourishing Jade Moistener pill and fed it to Lin Zi Yan. It was not a valuable concoction, but Ye Wei knew from his experience that this common pill was exactly what she needed at the moment.

“Water...” Lin Zi Yan mumbled, having sweated for hours she was extremely dehydrated.

Ye Wei went downstairs and started a fire for the kettle then returned to pour a glass of lukewarm water slowly down Lin Zi Yan’s throat.

Afraid that Zi Yan might catch a cold, Ye Wei channeled his Qi around his arms to warm Lin Zi Yan up and evaporate the sweat covering her gown. After a minute, her body was warm again and covered by a dry and therefore less revealing gown.

After Ye Wei warmed Lin Zi Yan up, he checked her breathing and her pulse. Luckily she appeared to have stabilized but was still very weak.

After Lin Zi Yan had stabilized a little, Ye Wei could finally relax. He took a deep breath and sat down next to the bed. Ye Wei was just inches away from Lin Zi Yan, but he felt distant; he knew nothing about her apart from her name and her brilliance. Although they were becoming close, the mysteries around her still remained; where was her family? What was sealed inside her body? Why was she in Green Moon City?

Ye Wei appreciated Lin Zi Yan’s cute face while she slept meanwhile he asked himself these questions over and over again. He was trying to sketch a possible answer in his mind that would explain every question he had regarding her. He had a feeling that Lin Zi Yan was going to leave Green Moon City one day to return home. And that the place Zi Yan call home would be somehow related to the dynasty.

‘Either way, I just need to get stronger! I am Master Yi’s legacy apprentice. I won’t be trapped in this little city forever.’ Self-motivating

had become a habit of Ye Wei's whenever he felt challenged.

For the next twenty hours, Lin Zi Yan was going in and out of a comatose state while Ye Wei guarded her, and fed her pills and water. Lin Zi Yan was starting to move a little, and showing signs of recovery.

While Ye Wei was taking care of her with his best efforts, Lin Zi Yan had the two longest dreams she had ever had. In the first one, she visited a magnificent hall where her parents and the rest of her family were present; Ye Wei was there with her too.

Upon arriving at Green Moon City, Lin Zi Yan was solely focused on her studies at South Star Academy. Although she was a popular girl with a lot of admirers, she always kept a distance with them and enjoyed her own company instead. That was before she got to know Ye Wei.

Undoubtedly, Lin Zi Yan held Ye Wei's talent in high regard. She was curious about how he acquired so much knowledge at such young age, and she greatly respected his resilience in the face of adversity. Maybe it was the fact that Ye Wei was two years younger than her that caused her to slowly let her guard down and welcomed him into her life like something akin to a little brother. Thus, that made Ye Wei one of the closest people she knew in this city.

In her second dream, she was training and attempting to break the seals on her body when she diverted her Qi to the wrong set of meridians. Not only did this accident cause her to failed, but her Sentient was impacted by her own Qi. She then used all her efforts to guide her Qi back to the right path. Although the situation improved, she was completely exhausted and dehydrated, and at this time, Ye Wei entered her second dream. She then felt embarrassed because her clothes were

completely transparent from sweat but she was unable to do anything.

‘That was a strange dream!’ Was the thought that woke Lin Zi Yan up. She slowly opened her eyes, but the glaring sun made her narrow them again.

“Zi Yan, are you awake?” Ye Wei was ecstatic. He stood up enthusiastically and asked, “How do you feel?”

“Little Wei...?” Lin Zi Yan was shocked then she realized that the second dream was her actual memory. She then looked down to see if she was decently dressed. She could see a blanket on top of her body, and judging by the texture her skin felt, she knew she was wearing nothing but a thin silk gown.

Lin Zi Yan blushed, and the temperature of her skin dramatically rose upon realizing Ye Wei saw her bare body. It was the first time since she was born that anyone saw her wearing this little. It caused a complicated feeling to arise when she knew she revealed that much in front of a boy.

This was not the plan. Lin Zi Yan wore that thin gown assuming she would be training alone and that it would provide better ventilation when her body temperature eventually rose due to the amount of Qi involved in breaking the seals. Never would she have imagined that Ye Wei, or anyone, would come through the locked doors.

Ye Wei knew what Lin Zi Yan’s facial expression meant, and he immediately tried to explain the situation and ease the tension. He didn’t want to be labeled as a pervert after all, “Zi Yan, I didn’t mean to intrude, but I felt a big disturbance of Qi when I was waiting for you to answer

the door. Judging by the magnitude of the pressure waves, it was not what I assumed you could create which led me to believe that you were under attack. I thought you were in danger, so I just rushed in. I couldn't believe what I saw when I finally came in..."

While Lin Zi Yan bought the explanation and was touched by how Ye Wei cared about her, she was not at all over the fact that a boy just saw her body. She was a great scholar but nothing she learned taught her how to behave in such situation.

Ye Wei too was stupefied because of the situation the two were in. He just hoped what he did would eventually be forgiven or forgotten.

"I am so sorry!" Ye Wei said with his head facing down.

Chapter 59 – Caretaking

Looking Ye Wei's guilty face, Lin Zi Yan didn't know how to react. She grabbed her blanket tightly and sighed deeply.

‘Should I really hold a grudge against Ye Wei for this? His intentions were good, and if it wasn't for him looking after me the injuries I sustained from this accident could have killed me...’

Feeling embarrassed and struggling to stay calm, Lin Zi Yan's reasonings told her that she should let it go, but her emotions said not to.

“Ye Wei.” The blushing on Zi Yan's face showed no signs of fading as she raised her head to look Ye Wei in the eyes. She said, “What you saw does not leave this room, okay?”

“My lips are sealed!” Ye Wei nodded heavily seeing as Lin Zi Yan was prepared to bury this incident and move on, but he felt inexplicably unsettled.

“If others learned about what happened today... you might actually get killed!” Lin Zi Yan warned him in a serious tone.

Ye Wei was puzzled why Zi Yan would be so caught up with what happened, and he wondered if she found him untrustworthy. He would never say anything that would ruin her reputation no matter what.

‘He looks pretty cute when he’s confused. Although he does look childish but he is quite a handsome boy...’ Lin Zi Yan’s mind wandered. ‘What am I thinking!?’

The rush of blood to her head didn’t really help her regain her strength. She wanted to get up, but her dantian and her meridians in her limbs were still weak, so she gave up trying once she noticed how floppy her arms and legs were.

“Ye Wei, can you make me some food?” She resorted to asking for help instead.

“I will get right to it!” Ye Wei replied reflexively and ran downstairs to the kitchen. The Ye’s had servants, but they were taught to do these basic things themselves from a young age which made him quite a good cook for someone with his family background.

Shortly after he went down the stairs, Ye Wei came back up holding a tray with a bowl of warm congee and some pills.

While Ye Wei was downstairs cooking, Zi Yan tried to strengthen her body by filling herself with Qi but failed miserably because of her dantian’s injury.

“Zi Yan, let me help you sit yourself up...” The awkwardness remained, but she was incapable of taking care of herself for the time being.

“Yea.” Lin Zi Yan shyly nodded.

Ye Wei put the tray on the nightstand and took her hand to help her up. He then held her in his left arm and fed her one spoonful at a time.

Their bodily contact did not help lighten the atmosphere.

Feeling Ye Wei's warm palm on her back, his touch sent shivers down her spine. It was one thing knowing he saw and touched her body when she was barely conscious, but quite another to experience it fully awake. While she was aware that he was not strong enough to protect her, she had never felt more secure than right now leaning on his chest and feeling his heartbeat.

Right now Lin Zi Yan was just a teenager caught in the moment, and she had no idea this memory would stay in her heart and revisit her more often than she could ever imagine.

Ye Wei was very careful when feeding her. He blew on each spoonful of food to make sure it wasn't too hot. While he was unquestionably doing a decent job at being attentive, he couldn't help but shift his attention to Zi Yan's wonderful scent and her exposed body through the opening of the silk gown.

It was Ye Wei's first time being this close to a girl he liked, and he kept telling himself it was not appropriate to stare, but he just couldn't help himself.

Aware of Ye Wei's gaze, Lin Zi Yan subtly tried to cover her chest with her arm, but it only opened up her gown even more. Her anxiety and embarrassment were becoming unbearable all of a sudden.

“Ye Wei!” She stared at him rebukingly. She knew this was unavoidable being in the same room with a young boy while dressed like this, but she expected better from this boy.

It was impossible for either one of them to remain calm while Ye Wei was ashamed of his behavior, it was just too hard for him not to look at the girl of his dreams; in fact, the fondness was mutual, but Lin Zi Yan had more on her mind. She knew her family background would make her relationships more complicated than she would have liked, and that her future was not really in her own hands.

Although Ye Wei had potential, Lin Zi Yan was mindful of how difficult it was for an outsider to earn her family’s approval and trust. A century old superpower was not going to accept a nameless boy to continue their prideful bloodline.

Lin Zi Yan signed resentfully. Sometimes she just wished she was born into an ordinary family.

She wished she could live a simple life without being involved in family disputes and having to please other people’s wishes.

‘I will get away someday...’

The awkward silence seemed never ending. After finishing her food quietly with Ye Wei’s aid, Zi Yan felt somewhat energized and wanting to cover herself up a little more to ease the tension, “Help me up. I would like to get changed!” Her face was still completely red.

“Yea!” Ye Wei nodded and helped her balance while she took small wobbly steps back to her room.

Ye Wei stepped out of the room then shut the doors behind him. He took a deep breath and loosened his shoulders. Scenes from the training room incident kept replaying in his head. He deeply regretted his behavior, but on the other hand, he couldn’t rid himself of his impure thoughts.

Just being left alone was enough to make his mind wander. He couldn’t stop visualizing how Lin Zi Yan was getting changed behind the door. He shook his head and sat down to cultivate, hoping that would clear his mind.

As he was beginning to focus, he was immediately distracted by a loud bang from inside the room.

‘What now?’ Ye Wei was worried. He jumped up and knocked on her door quickly. “Zi Yan! What’s happening?” He screamed hysterically.

“I’m fine!” Her tone of voice was hard, but it was also shaky and the volume was low. It sounded to Ye Wei that she was in pain.

The seals on Lin Zi Yan’s body were too strong, and she literally used all of her Qi and energy earlier trying to break one of them. Until her meridians and dantian recovered, she would not be able to store Qi in her body. She was now as weak as a normal person.

Ye Wei was not convinced, and he stood right outside the door listening

closely for any movements.

Seconds later, another banging noise came from the room followed by the sound of Lin Zi Yan grunting.

“Zi Yan!” Ye Wei screamed anxiously. He did not get a reply, and therefore shouted again. Even then still not a sound came from the room.

He started to panic. ‘What just happened!?’ He was too worried to stand still and wait around while Zi Yan could be dying. He slammed the door open hoping it was not too late.

Chapter 60 – Promise

Ye Wei rushed in to discover Lin Zi Yan lying on the ground. The left sleeve of her gown was dyed red by blood. He immediately ran forward to check her condition.

There was a huge bruise on her forehead and a long cut on her arm that didn't look like it was going to stop bleeding anytime soon.

“Zi Yan! Can you hear me?” Ye Wei was completely distressed. He knelt down to feed her another Jade Moistener pill after which he crushed a trauma pill into powder and applied it to her wound.

“I... I'm okay.” Lin Zi Yan drowsily opened her eyes. She panicked again when she realized she was still in the same revealing silk gown. She tried to turn away from Ye Wei and stand up but immediately lost her balance and slipped. Luckily Ye Wei caught her before she hurt herself more. The seals on her body were very unstable at the moment and were disrupting her body functions, or else she would have already recovered given that she was stronger than most humans.

Ye Wei didn't understand why she was panicking and acting crazy. “Stop moving!” He said while frowning.

After Zi Yan was calmed down by Ye Wei's steady voice, he wrapped his right arm behind her neck and lifted her legs with his free hand then slowly rested her body on the bed. Just as he let go of her body, her gown slid off.

Lin Zi Yan closed her eyes and shivered in embarrassment. She didn't even have the strength to cover her body with her hands. She had never felt this weak her entire life; she was scared, shy, and drowning in helplessness.

The soft and smooth texture was telling Ye Wei that he should not let go, but he did not let his impulses get the better of him. Instead, he focused on Zi Yan's tired face, and how to help her recover.

'One day I will win her heart properly, and before then I should not allow myself to take advantage of situations like this. She is too gentle and nice; I can't degrade her any further.'

Lin Zi Yan's eyes were tightly shut, so tight that her eyelashes were twitching. She just wanted to hide her nervousness and forget about the awkward situation she was in.

Ye Wei reached for the blanket and gently laid it on top of Zi Yan. He was actually relieved that she was now covered as he could finally think straight again. He filled his hand with Qi and placed them on Lin Zi Yan's forehead, and then started massaging the bruise. The bruise faded little by little with each of Ye Wei's strokes.

Lin Zi Yan slowly opened her eyes after understanding Ye Wei's intent. She actually started to relax and enjoy the little treat.

Although they weren't talking, their body language showed that they both felt warm and blissful.

Lin Zi Yan was watching Ye Wei, it was simply impossible for him to break eye contact. Feeling that the tension was building, Ye Wei opted to start a conversation. “So why did you move to Green Moon City on your own?”

Lin Zi Yan heard the question but was hesitant to answer. She arranged her thoughts and said: “Sorry, I can not go into details about that!”

“Oh...” Ye Wei felt slightly upset by Zi Yan being so secretive.

Zi Yan could see from Ye Wei’s facial expression that he was offended, and as she didn’t want to come across as distrustful she explained, “There is a large city thousands of miles away from here. It is hundreds of times bigger than Green Moon City. The martial families there are so strong it is actually hard to compare them to the forces here. My family is one of the most resourceful and influential families there. There are people in my family who could single-handedly erase Green Moon City off the map!”

Ye Wei’s eyes widened. He had heard about the world beyond Green Moon City, and he was told there were unimaginable powers out there, but he never thought he would meet a person from one of those high places. That someone actually turned out to be Lin Zi Yan.

“I am a direct descendant of my family. When I was born, somebody put numerous seals on my body. If I want to breakthrough one level, I will have to spend extra effort on loosening or breaking the seals so I can access my Qi.” Lin Zi Yan continued, “However, I can use part of the sealed energy at random times, they are out of control. I have always wondered who put these seals on me and for what reason...”

It was an unexpected confession, and Ye Wei did not even understand half of what Lin Zi Yan was saying. He did know that Lin Zi Yan becoming a Warrior under these circumstances was quite astonishing.

“Just focus on training. When you are stronger and able to defend yourself, I might tell you more! I did loosen a couple seals today and got some of my power back from that. I will be stronger than I am now once my body recovers.” Lin Zi Yan smiled to cover up her worries; the past two days hadn’t treated her well.

“That’s good to hear!” Ye Wei nodded and replied. He then solemnly looked at Lin Zi Yan and continued, “Zi Yan, next time you attempt to break those seals, let me know in advance. I will come to guard you!”

Unsure about Ye Wei’s intention, Lin Zi Yan started blushing again, “Erm... Why?” She asked shyly.

Ye Wei’s face turned red and started stammering, “I... I’m just, just worried that you will get into an accident like this again...”

Lin Zi Yan was not sure whether to accept his offer or not. She would have to be in thin clothes when she trains again. She did not want to go through this embarrassing situation all over again.

“Zi Yan, I will get you another glass of water.” The awkward silence was getting to Ye Wei’s nerves; he thought she wanted to say no but couldn’t say it to his face. He stood up and tried to escape downstairs

Just as he was leaving the room, Lin Zi Yan stopped him: “Ye Wei...”

“What’s the matter?” He turned around in confusion not knowing what to expect.

Lin Zi Yan looked toward Ye Wei with a soft gaze, “Ye Wei, I meant it earlier... Nobody can know about what happened today, not a single detail... We...” She didn’t know whether to tell how she felt about him.

“I know. This will be our secret!” Ye Wei was increasingly frustrated. He tried to stay calm, but it was just impossible. He stomped out through the doors right after he replied.

Lin Zi Yan could see Ye Wei was hurt, and her heart was hurting from feeling guilty for giving him so much information at once and pushing him away to an extent.

Ye Wei suddenly stopped by the door on his way out. He did not turn around, but he spoke loud enough for Lin Zi Yan to hear it, “I know I am not good enough for you both in terms of my family background and cultivation. You are in another world than me...”

“No... That’s not what I mean...” Lin Zi Yan’s eyes turned red, and her heart was aching. She couldn’t find the right words to explain how she felt.

“But...” Ye Wei took a deep breath and said with determination, “My family is not very powerful, but we will work our way up; I am weak, but I will keep training as hard as I can! I will catch up with you one day and

even overtake you! I just got to know you not long ago, but you've become the most important girl in my life. We are more like brother and sister now, but when I am strong enough I will ask you out properly and hopefully you'd eventually become my wife..."

Ye Wei stormed downstairs after giving the speech.

Lin Zi Yan was not expecting a confession, and her face was as red as a cherry tomato. The sweet taste lingered in her mouth while a line of tears ran down her face.

"Ye Wei, you are talented and hardworking, but you don't understand how my family works... I can't expose you to that kind of risk. I'm so sorry." Lin Zi Yan sighed and wiped her tears dry.

Chapter 61 – Bloodmist Valley

After Ye Wei returned with a glass of water, the pair didn't say a word as they both preferred the silence. He stayed by the bedside to guard Lin Zi Yan while she recovered.

Although Zi Yan was touched by his kindness, she treated Ye Wei coldly. Contrary to her heart, she didn't want him to get too close and get hurt.

Time flew and by the time Zi Yan was almost in her best condition, two more days had passed. Her cultivation hit a new high as her body recovered.

When Lin Zi Yan was strong enough to get out of bed by herself, Ye Wei decided it was time for him to leave: "Zi Yan, I am off!"

While Ye Wei was walking away, Zi Yan did not take her eyes off his back. She wanted to talk to him, but when she opened her lips nothing would come out.

'Why was I born into this family? Why can't I decide anything by myself? I just want to have a simple life! Ye Wei, I can't be with you but I know you will do well for yourself. I hope I can see that day with my own eyes before I have to leave the city...'

Her heartache choked her as she cried quietly.

Zi Yan was not the only one feeling uneasy, Ye Wei was hurt but he believed he had the capability to improve and didn't let the devastation stay in his system. Ignoring the attention he got from his fellow students on the path to the dorms, he ran back to his place while planning how to fulfil his dreams. His dreams about becoming a Runemaster, about making his family thrive, and his dreams about Zi Yan.

He noticed that the sun was shining through the gap between a few large rainclouds as he looked up to the sky now and then, appreciating the spectacular scenery as his mind wandered. Ye Wei immediately started cultivating again once he arrived back at his house.

While Ye Wei was training behind closed doors, a few things happened inside and outside the academy.

The news of his status spread to all the staff and student. The story of a one star Student becoming Master YI's apprentice was an inspiring one, and the atmosphere at South Star Academy had never been this positive. Some of the students who were about to give up were reinvigorated, and the students who were already doing well were now doubling their efforts.

Xiao Qi did not have the best time because it was a commonly known fact that he did not get along with Ye Wei. So after the news broke, everyone started to alienate him. Some kids from martial families even started to pick fights with him hoping Ye Wei would hear about it. Xiao Qi's social life had never been this bad. He was very frustrated as he was not at all used to being on the receiving end of bullying or being left alone.

With Du Ming Ze when the teachers found out what he did to Ye Wei's

old room they notified his family about his misconduct. When the Du family learned about it, they were petrified. They knew what it meant to be on the wrong side of Master Yi, and the Ye family. The Du family took Du Ming Ze out of South Star Academy and rumour had it that they physically punished him so hard that he had to rest in bed for weeks.

While people expected Master Mu to speak to Master Yi to solve some of their disagreements, he never really stood up for the Du family, nor did he show himself in public after the duel. That was when Green Moon City realized that although both of them were Runemasters, Master Yi and Master Mu were on completely different levels.

All this was told to Ye Wei by Cao Ning; he remained close with Ye Wei even after the move. He visited Ye Wei a few times with gossip and supplies, this let Ye Wei focus solely on his training. Though, because of this Cao Ning's friendship with Ye Wei was spotted by people. The martial families treated him as Ye Wei's sidekick, a close associate. They would give Cao Ning pills and other gifts now and then which improved his cultivation speed.

'I wonder what Master Yi is up to at the moment.' Ye Wei thought as he was taking a little break from training. A few days had passed since he returned from Lin Zi Yan's.

There was a knocking sound on the door and Ye Wei was surprised to see who came to his house.

"Zi Yan...?!" Ye Wei blushed when he saw the face of the girl he had been thinking about the past few days.

“Hey, you look surprised! Am I not welcome here?” Lin Zi Yan was wearing a cheeky smile. It seemed like she had put the embarrassing incident behind her.

“Of course you are welcome! I was just expecting to see Cao Ning’s silly face.” Ye Wei shook his head and broke into a smile.

Lin Zi Yan could see from his darkened eyes that he was tired. She was happy to be able to refresh him with great news, “Little Wei, I have received information regarding Welkin Leaves!”

“Really!? Where!?” The news widened Ye Wei’s tired eyes, and he looked more energized than he had for days.

“Bloodmist Valley!” Lin Zi Yan felt Ye Wei’s enthusiasm and surprise and therefore answered immediately.

“Blood what?” Ye Wei frowned as the name did not ring any bells.

“It is to the north of Frozen Sun City, deep inside the Red Wolf Mountains.” Lin Zi Yan explained, “About half a month ago, the Lee family of Frozen Sun City sent their youngsters to train in the mountains, and when they went past Bloodmist Valley they found some Welkin Leaves trimmings.”

“And what happened to them?” Ye Wei couldn’t wait for Lin Zi Yan to finish.

“The Lee family sold them to an anonymous Runemaster for one point

eight million silver. The transaction was kept on the down low, and that's all the information my source could find unfortunately." Lin Zi Yan frowned and said in a slightly regretful tone.

"Okay." Ye Wei digested what he heard then nodded. 'If he bought it for that price, I don't think he would resell it for a profit. Needless to say the Runemaster would be nowhere to be found anyway...'

"I will go to Bloodmist Valley!" Ye Wei took a deep breath and said to Lin Zi Yan, his determination was audible.

Although Ye Wei had no idea where it was, he was ready to go through the gates of hell for his cousin whom he owed his life to without a word of complaint.

"I have a beast carriage ready for us." Ye Wei's hasty decision was all within Lin Zi Yan's calculation. Proud of her prediction and entertained by Ye Wei's hotheadedness, she chuckled.

"Zi Yan... You can't go!" Ye Wei frowned, he did not want to rely on Zi Yan when it came to family business. He was too prideful and felt that he owed her enough already.

"If I don't tag along, it will take you a very long time to locate Bloodmist Valley!" Lin Zi Yan smiled at Ye Wei with a light blush. "Just let me help you as kind of a repayment!"

Ye Wei didn't understand she seemed so happy. A few days ago the tension between them was unbearable. He nodded and said, "You're

right, I appreciate your help.”

“Let’s get ready!” Lin Zi Yan said lightheartedly as she proceeded to help Ye Wei pack then led him out of the house.

A horned elephant carriage was waiting outside, and they quickly boarded and headed off.

Frozen Sun City was a city located to the west of Green Moon City. It was way larger and more populated than Ye Wei’s hometown. When the carriage drove past the busy streets of the big city, Ye Wei was amused by the view and the people.

They went off road at the north end of the city into the wilderness and passed through the mountains. As they got closer to their destination the red mist was thickening. The mist was constantly changing shape from one second to the next and it smelled a little like blood.

‘We will be there soon...’ Lin Zi Yan slowed the beast down before they were spotted by other travellers as she did not wish to draw too much attention.

After arriving, they got off the carriage and walked towards Bloodmist Valley. Ye Wei could hear chattering noises in front of him, and he quietly walked ahead of Lin Zi Yan. He spotted a large group of tents on the flat ground far ahead. ‘Why are all these people here?’

Lin Zi Yan could see Ye Wei was confused, “Bloodmist Valley is a very strange place. According to legends, it was the training ground for a very

strong group of cultivators. They left a lot of treasures in there and they made the mist with a stance to keep people out of this place. The stronger one is, the more one will be hurt by the red mist. It is life-threatening for cultivators above Warrior level, and I've heard tales of condensed prime Warriors getting paralyzed by the mist long time ago when they discovered the place.” She told Ye Wei as she was looking at an old sheepskin map in her hand.

“See the thick mist over there? It gets thinner every few days, sometimes weeks, and when it does we will enter, but we will have to watch for the signs. When the mist starts thickening again, we will get out. People have found great treasures in there, but not all of them found their way back out of the thick mist...” Lin Zi Yan said as the two walked towards the edge of the valley. There were more than a hundred groups of people gathered close by where the thick mist was. The pair decided to wait near the others so they too could enter as soon as the mist dispersed.

Although they tried to keep a low profile, the beauty of Lin Zi Yan had the opposite effect. The cultivators couldn't help but talk about the elegant girl who had just arrived. How she was dressed like someone important, and how lucky Ye Wei was to have her company.

“That's a lot of people. They look like they know the valley well so they must be here for the treasures.” Ye Wei shared his concern with Lin Zi Yan, “We will have to act quickly and seize the chance before the herb is spotted by anyone else. I don't want to miss this chance to save Cousin Zhong.” He clenched his fist with determination and took a couple of deep breaths, then went back to observing the ever changing mist.

Chapter 62 – Talents From Ning City

“Oh? A beast carriage? And there were only two of them?” A routine scouting report raised a green shirted youngster’s suspicion. “A skinny boy and a purple haired girl right?” His surveillance was concealed by many others who were looking in the same direction.

At the age of fifteen, Li Zi Yan looked way more mature and elegant than most teenage girls therefore it was not a surprise that she was drawing so much attention.

But simply watching them did not provide enough information so approached the couple, “Hi!” He greeted them while astounded by Li Zi Yan’s beauty after taking a closer look.

Alarmed by the green shirted youngster’s diplomatic smile, Li Zi Yan subconsciously took a small step back.

Driven by the need to befriend and find out more about the couple who traveled in such a luxurious carriage, he enthusiastically lifted his hand towards Ye Wei, “My name is Zhou Hou, what about you?” He saw the indifference from Li Yan Yan’s posture and figured he could find out more from the innocent looking Ye Wei.

“I am Ye Wei!” He wondered if he should use a pseudonym but didn’t see the need because it seemed that people here came from all across the country, and Ye Wei was a pretty common name anyways.

“First time here?” Zhou Hou asked with a smile on his face after briefly

looking them over.

“How did you know?”

“I’ve been here before. During which, I had to camp for months. If I don’t recognize you then you’re probably a first-timer!” Zhou Hou chuckled then continued, “I basically know this place like the back of my hand.”

“Ah... That makes sense!” Ye Wei nodded.

“May I ask where you two are from?” He could feel Ye Wei’s guard was down.

Lin Zi Yan discreetly nudged Ye Wei and he finally realized what Zhou Hou was trying to do. “We are from far away, we’re just passing through!”

Zhou Hou was no fool; he didn’t expect them to tell the whole truth so he just smiled and nodded. “Bloodmist Valley is an interesting place, Students can basically walk in unaffected by the mist whereas Warriors can’t really enter unless the mist is thin. Not to mention condensed prime Warriors who will most definitely be killed if they enter! With that in mind Students should still bring a Warrior with them because there are some strange and dangerous creatures within the valley...” He kept playing the friendly stranger.

‘Judging by their age they are at most Students, but why are they so calm? People usually freak out a little when I tell them about the valley.’ Zhou Hou thought as he kept analysing the couple. ‘They seem rich in

the end, so they probably came prepared.' He was thinking about recruiting the two for his expedition team to increase their chances of salvaging something valuable.

Zhou Hou guessed correctly, Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan talked about what they were going to do when they were in the carriage.

"There are fifty-six people in my group. Seventeen of them are Warriors, would you two be interested in joining us? We have been in the valley before, and we're familiar with the terrain. You two seem like nice people, and it would be mutually beneficial for both parties." He suggested with a smile on his face, and as he spoke he could feel that Lin Zi Yan was not just a pretty face.

Ye Wei turned to Lin Zi Yan for her opinion, but before he could open his mouth she answered Zhou Hou in a cold, calm tone: "We can go together, but if we find Welkin Leaves they are ours, everything else you can keep."

"Oh that's what you two want? No worries! We will enter the valley together, and when you two find what you want you can leave, but staying together will increase our chances of getting out safe!" Zhou Hou admired their bravery, just a while back a group of thirty warriors were ambushed by a group of beast and never made it out of the valley. The past of the Bloodmist Valley was literally painted in blood.

"There around ten thousand people here at this campsite; some are alone while others prefer to be in groups. We are actually one of the stronger groups. Some of the others are pretty hopeless actually, like those guys over there. I don't even see the point of them trying!" Zhou Hou pointed to a group of seven aggressive looking youngsters and

chuckled, “I heard the strongest of them is only a five star Student!”

Lin Zi Yan’s eyes followed Zhou Hou’s finger to the group and a purple light flashed through her eyes. She was intrigued by the aura they were giving off.

Ye Wei too found the group intriguing. Judging by their confident appearance, they didn’t look like five star Students to him.

“Stop staring at them, they are not worth our time.” Zhou Hou said pridefully as he signaled the couple to follow him.

“Little Wei, this is for you!” Lin Zi Yan discreetly handed Ye Wei a interspatial bag.

He opened it and peeked inside. He discovered that there were five Mystic scrolls within, and he couldn’t help but be shocked. Each of the scrolls was worth a fortune and Lin Zi Yan had just given him five.

Ye Wei wanted to decline the gift, but Lin Zi Yan held his hand down, and signaled for him to be discreet.

“These two are defensive scrolls.” Lin Zi Yan pointed inside the bag and whispered in Ye Wei’s ear, “You will activate a defensive Mystic stance by tearing it. Only use them when you’re in trouble. And the other three are offensive ones.”

The physical contact and her soft voice sent a shiver down his spine.

“Remember their faces!” Zhou Hou pointed at a group of teenagers in a distance. They were wearing blood colored uniforms with a golden hem. He seemed intimidated just by the sight of them.

“They are all from the Golden Wood Academy in Frozen Sun City. Everyone of them is a seven star Warrior or above. Their leader is the nine star Warrior, Luo Wu Xue. He is the most talented student at his school, and he defeated a ten star Warrior with a low level Myst stance. He’s quite a character...”

Ye Wei followed Zhou Hou’s glance, and he saw three youngsters dressed in red about three hundred meters away from him.

One of them was significantly paler than the other two. He was wearing the same robe as the others, but his tall build set him apart. Luo Wu Xue was sat down cultivating but even still he stood out. He quietly cultivated, and while he did there was a screen of red Qi surrounding him.

‘I can feel his energy from here... What kind of stance is that?’ Ye Wei was slightly scared from what he was seeing.

Lin Zi Yan though was calm and collected like usual. She didn’t seem to care about these three while Zhou Hou was too afraid to keep his eyes on them. He turned away and briefly introduced some of the other campers around them.

“Yue Yao, the strongest youngster of the Yue family from Frozen Sun City. He is only seventeen but he is already a seven star Warrior!”

“Lu Chao, the strongest youngster in the Lu family, also from Frozen Sun City.”

“Hong Xun. Now, he is a mysterious one. Nobody knows where he is from or how powerful he is. But three days ago he had a fight with a six star Warrior over a disagreement, and he managed to kill his opponent with one palm strike...”

With that many people gathered in one place, conflicts were very common between groups and families. Every once in awhile there were some condensed prime Warriors at the camps sent by the groups' leaders to protect the youngsters before they enter the Bloodmist Valley.

“These four are the most dangerous people here, that we know of at least.” Months of being at the camp made Zhou Hou quite paranoid and cautious but that's what kept him alive. “Just avoid conflicts if you can; it's for the best.” He then led Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan to his group.

Everyone was there. The seventeen Warriors along with the rest who were nine, or ten star Students. Although they were sitting together by the campfire, they weren't really talking because they were just temporarily put together for the expedition.

“We don't know when the blood mist will thin out. It might be in a few hours or in a few days...” Zhou Hou said reluctantly.

After the talk with Zhou Hou, Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan settled down and started training by the campfire while waiting for the mist to fade.

A few campers near them started chatting.

“I’ve heard a group of youngsters from Ning City just arrived!”

“Ning City? Maybe they are here for the inner regions.”

“You’re saying that they want to enter the forbidden sanctums? That would be interesting, I don’t think anyone has ever made it there. Well maybe they did, but they didn’t live to tell the tale.”

“I don’t know, we’ll see.”

Ning City was the biggest of the thirty-six cities on the outskirts of the dynasty’s territory. This big city attracted talents from everywhere, and rumour had it that some returned prime Warriors resided there.

“Why would they be here otherwise? I think they came prepared.”

At the other side of the campfire, Lin Zi Yan was disturbed by what she heard, and she opened her eyes while frowning.

Chapter 63 – Rune Barrier

Lin Zi Yan quickly calmed down and went back to training.

A lavishly dressed teenage boy walked passed Zhou Hou's camp, and he spotted the most astounding beauty he had ever encountered; a girl that made his heart skip a beat.

He couldn't stop his feet from walking towards Lin Zi Yan. He saw that Ye Wei sat right next to her, but he didn't think the plain-looking boy was associated with her.

"Hello, my name is Lu Chao. I am from the Lu family in Frozen Sun City. What would you like me to refer to you as?" His snobbishness was over the top, and you could tell he was proud of himself from his posture all the way to the way he introduced himself. Being the boy with the most potential in his family, and also one of the top three teenagers in his city did more harm than good to his personality.

Zhou Hou was alarmed by Lu Chao's visit. 'Why is he here?' He wasn't the only person who was not pleased with the sudden visit. Lin Zi Yan wasn't impressed by Lu Chao's attitude and therefore didn't reply while Ye Wei just frowned.

The tension was building up, and Zhou Hou came over to dismiss the unwanted visitor. "Mister Lu, it's good to see you. Did you need something from her? She is a member of our group; maybe I can help?"

"You have no business here!" Lu Chao did not respect Zhou Hou at all

as he knew he didn't have to. "Can't you see I am trying to have a conversation with this lady?"

He pushed Zhou Hou to the side and continued speaking to Lin Zi Yan, "If you wish to enter the Bloodmist Valley you might as well join us! I can guarantee your safety under our banner." He garnished his offer with a confident smile.

"Please leave me alone!" Lin Zi Yan was irritated not charmed. Her tone of voice was as cold as ice.

In frustration, Lu Chao frowned and grunted, he couldn't understand why she treated him like this, "What do you mean miss?" He had not been declined his whole life.

"I would like you to go away. Do you understand?" Lin Zi Yan raised her long, slender eyebrows as the temperature around her seemed to have dropped suddenly.

"Don't insult me!" Lu Chao looked furiously at Lin Zi Yan.

Ye Wei clenched his fists; he wouldn't sit back if Lu Chao decided to move any closer to Lin Zi Yan, regardless of his cultivation deficit.

A purple light flashed through Lin Zi Yan's pupils, Lu Chao's head slightly dropped forward, his confidence was replaced by fear. He was spooked by what he saw in her eyes; his body froze, and his palms turned sweaty.

“My lady, I should not have disturbed you. I apologize for the intrusion.” He pulled his shoulders back and stood up respectfully. He bowed to Lin Zi Yan then ran away clumsily.

Ye Wei was shocked to see Lin Zi Yan’s influence outside Green Moon City.

Zhou Hou and the rest of the group had many questions in their minds, and they started to wonder what kind of person had just joined their group. They all looked towards Lin Zi Yan now and then, but they didn’t dare talk to her. ‘What was that? He’s the golden child of the second biggest family in Frozen Sun City, how could a teenage girl scare him away?’

Now Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan were left in peace. They could finally focus on training in the quiet. The golden flash in Ye Wei’s Sentient was surging. It sensed danger within the red mists and this gave him an unsettled feeling that something monstrously fearsome was concealed within the depths of this valley.

He opened his eyes and looked at the mist. There was a voice in his head that told him he should not enter the BloodMist Valley if he treasured his life. Ye Wei did treasure his life, but he just prioritized Ye Zhong’s life above his own. ‘Finding Welkin Leaves to save cousin Zhong, that’s my mission.’

A few hours later, the lingering red mist started vibrating and pulsing rhythmically. It sounded like a colossal monster was breathing.

The red mist was quickly thinning revealing the vegetation and rocks in

the valley.

“The mist is fading!”

“Get your asses up! The mist is fading!” The noise level escalated quickly.

It was logical that the campers were heated up as if they miss this window of opportunity they did not know when the next one would present itself.

The campers stirred up chaos as they entered the valley, but their speed sorted them into distinguishable groups. At the front were the seven star Warriors, led by Luo Wu Xue, Lu Chao, Hong Xun, and Yue Yao as they flew and glided ahead with their primal energy feathered wings which left swirls of red mist behind.

And far behind them were the six and five star Warriors kicking up dust and entering the valley in a flash. The rest were whizzing through overgrown trees and rugged rocks towards the valley akin a swarm of ants.

“Let’s not wait!” Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan stopped hesitating and followed the large crowd.

“This is...” Ye Wei noticed through trees and rocks that the red mist was dispersing as he headed towards the bottom of Bloodmist Valley. It was too thin to cover the breathtaking sight that froze him in place. His eyes were wide open and set on an enormous sculpture. It was a statue of

a crouching beast that was almost a kilometer tall.

The delicately sculpted details of the beast made it feel alive. It was covered in scales from head to tail, and on its forehead were three long horns. This beast's mouth was open, and there were runes carved on the inside of its mouth which was where the red mist originated from. Its sharp teeth looked bloodied from the reflecting redness around them.

It was obvious who was entering Bloodmist Valley for the first time. The newbies were all stunned and stood still, scared witless by the statue whereas the others were running straight towards the mouth of the beast. Only the experienced people dared to head right into it because they knew that was real entrance!

The first-timers saw how everyone else was rushing in and eventually followed once they overcame their fear.

Lin Zi Yan quietly mumbled to herself, and there was a deep purple flash in her clear eyes. "This is a Selenic spirit beast, are we at..." The statue reminded her about one of the old articles in her family's library.

"Let's go!" She said in a cautious tone. Lin Zi Yan was worried, but she did not let that affect their mission because Ye Zhong's life was at stake. They followed the rest of the group into the statue's mouth after the little pause.

Just as they entered, they were already facing an obstacle. There were around forty tunnels in front of them, and the running crowd came to a stop. Everyone was worryingly wondering which path they should take while the braver and experienced quickly disappeared into different

tunnels.

Lou Chao noticed Lin Zi Yan's presence from a distance, and he quickly picked and entered a tunnel before she saw him.

Ye Wei's frustrated gaze was on the tunnels behind the thin mist. The tunnels all looked similar therefore everyone gave up on analyzing them and just entered a random tunnel as they could not tell which was the safe path.

As Lin Zi Yan was struggling, wondering which way to go, the golden flash appeared in Ye Wei's Sentient, "Zi Yan, the seventh tunnel from the right!" Out of all the tunnels, he could feel the strongest runic disturbance from the seventh.

"Everyone follow me!" Zhou Hou shouted at his team signaling them to enter one of the tunnels. He saw that Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan were far behind and wanted to pick their own path, after exchanging a regretful look he decided to move on without the two. 'If that's what they want...'

"Yea!" Lin Zi Yan narrowed her eyes while looking at Ye Wei with a bit of doubt, but she trusted him, and he looked confident and determined, so they proceeded without further discussions.

The tunnel was lit up by slightly red swirling runic patterns on both sides. Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan were not the only ones who picked this path. People were staring at the runes closely with greedy eyes. The swirls were arranged in a way that resembled the shape of a door.

Further down the tunnel there were swirls that had been broken open, and there was a stone house behind each of the openings. It was not a strange scene for some; the experienced cultivators just ran through the tunnel stopping now and then to see if they could forcefully break open the swirls. Everyone who managed to break them looked incredibly happy. They ran inside and searched for treasure.

“Rune Barriers...” Lin Zi Yan’s purple eyes looked a bit worried. She slightly frowned and mumbled because she had read about them before and knew how problematic they could be.

Chapter 64 – Silver Moon

‘So that’s how it works! The treasures are hidden in the stone houses!’ Ye Wei figured out while observing the people around him. He also realized these rune barriers were the source of the runic disturbance he felt.

A fight broke out not far ahead of Ye Wei. The sound of Mystic stances exploding echoed through the tunnel, and he could see bodies flying everywhere.

“I will not show mercy to anyone who stands in my way! Not here!” A tall six star Warrior activated a Dark Lightning stance and bolts of black electricity wrapped around his body. The sound of thunder accompanied each step this human thunderstorm took as he charged towards a few men guarding the front of a rune barrier. He reached them quickly knocking quite a few of them out cold.

Some of the lower star level Warriors and Students around him were lucky enough to dodge the attack and ran away without looking back. They had lost their treasure to the tall Warrior, but they were not going to lose their lives too.

“Zi Yan, can we only break these barriers by force?” A golden flash shone through his eyes as Ye Wei scanned the whirls of runes around him and one of them in particular caught his attention.

Like all Mystic stances, rune barriers were composed of sequences of runes. This one was slightly different than the others. The patterns on it

were spinning, and the energy seemed to be growing and spreading. Because it was located close to the entrance of the tunnel, many people had tried breaking it open, but it was still completely intact!

The paths of this rune barrier were very complex, and upon touching it, Ye Wei 's fingers were numbed by the enormous rebounding force. He stepped back and kept observing the barrier. The whirling patterns were making him dizzy, so he closed his eyes for a brief moment. Surprisingly when his eyes closed, he could feel the energy flow more clearly, and he also felt the complex swirl's multiple pivots.

“Rune barriers are really just a simple form of runic seals. If you find the breakpoint of them, you don't need brute force to crack them. A trained Runemasters, for example, would be able to find these breakpoints easily. However, ordinary cultivators like us will have to find the weak spots and break these barriers by force from these spots.” Lin Zi Yan answered while observing the spinning rune's whirls around her, “Don't waste your time looking for the breakpoint, though, just see if you can find smaller thus weaker barriers, and I will break them open, did you forget I am a Warrior?” She added as she could see Ye Wei was caught up in looking at that one rune barrier.

Ye Wei nodded and stood back up. After getting a good footing, he closed his eyes again and placed his hand close to the rune barrier that knocked him down. He attempted to locate its weak spots. ‘It's a shame I am not a seven star Student yet!’ Ye Wei was a bit upset about having to rely on Lin Zi Yan again.

Just as he sighed, his Sentient flashed with a golden light and sent a surge of primal energy to his hands. The energy then found its way to the pivot points Ye Wei earlier discovered and took over the rune's flow movement. The whirls started to spin faster, and the rune barrier began

to shine. Seconds after, it cracked open with a bang!

Lin Zi Yan was looking away, “I told you, you will have to use a stance to break the barrier...” She heard the noise Ye Wei was making and turned around to see if he was hurt. But she froze in shock when she saw how the rune barrier was opened and a stone house was revealed behind the tunnel wall.

‘He’s just a four star student! What was that? Could this be his rune consonance?’ Lin Zi Yan was not incorrect, Ye Wei’s rune consonance allowed his Qi to adhere onto his body and beyond that more easily than anyone at his level or even higher for that matter.

Ye Wei pulled his hand back when he heard the bang. He relievedly exhaled and displayed a childish excitement on his smiling face. He never thought he would be able to open it that easily.

“Zi Yan, let’s go in!” Ye Wei was a little forceful as he pulled Lin Zi Yan into the stone house before she could react.

Once they entered the stone house, the runes on the wall vibrated, and the barrier closed itself again.

“We don’t have much time!” Lin Zi Yan could sense the energy of a few powerful Warriors approaching, and if they were not quick while searching the house, a fight could break out when the Warriors arrive.

When Ye Wei opened another door to the stone house, a bright light blinded him. He narrowed his eyes and discovered the floor of the main

room was tiled with extremely valuable cold-marrow jade. This caused the temperature to be significantly lower inside the main room, and there was a thin mist of water vapor above the floor.

Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan looked around them and found out that they were surrounded by shelves and closets full of big and small containers.

Lin Zi Yan opened bottle after bottle and poured the pills into her palm for further inspection. She noticed that all the bottles contained the same pill. These pills were all glossy, each of them was about the size of a cherry, and they had a refreshing fragrance. There were also a few patterns printed on them that vaguely resembled a silver moon.

“Are these Silver Moon pills?” Lin Zi Yan turned her head to look at all the bottles around her, and she abruptly took in a deep breath of cold air; she was completely dumbfounded by the sight.

Regardless of cultivation, from Students to renowned returned prime Warriors, body strength is always the foundation to any type of training. That’s why quencher pills were so sought after.

‘I didn’t think these exist anymore!’ Silver Moon pills were around five times as effective as Fiery Sun Quenchers, and its fabled formula was lost in time; therefore, the pills were thought to be extinct!

While the rare Fiery Sun Quenchers were known to be the best quencher pills available on the market, very, very few powerful families and martial artists were rumoured to have access to the secret formulas for and, stocks of other high-quality pills and potions that were reserved for personal and family use, Silver Moon pills were one such pill.

These Silver Moon pills can easily fetch ten thousand silver each at auction, and by Lin Zi Yan's visual estimation there were a few hundred of these pills in the room.

This room was worth more than a Big Three family's wealth that had been accumulated through generations. But their rarity can not really be measured with money as they will ultimately be used for a greater cause than numbers and luxuries.

Lin Zi Yan was from a wealthy background and she didn't really care about money, but she couldn't ignore these pills. "Ye Wei I will guard the entrance; meanwhile, you have to collect all these pills!" Not knowing what they were, Ye Wei just stood there shivering in the cold.

"Okay!" Ye Wei nodded, and took out the interspatial bag he had acquired earlier while starting to collecting the pills.

"There are three hundred and eighty pills altogether. I'll split them up equally." Ye Wei smiled and handed the pills to Zi Yan. "Here is your one hundred and ninety pills."

Ye Wei was not sure what these pills were but judging from Lin Zi Yan's facial expression he could guess that they were valuable, 'If it's valuable I should share it with her! I wouldn't be here if she didn't lead the way.'

"Little Wei, about the portion you just gave me... Do you know how much these pills are worth? Lin Zi Yan spoke to Ye Wei's innocent smiling face.

“How much are they worth? What has that got to do with anything?” Ye Wei shrugged and asked casually. ‘If it wasn’t for you, Zi Yan, I wouldn’t have become Master Yi’s apprentice and my family would not even exist today. Whatever they are worth doesn’t really matter...’

“Okay then! Thank you very much!” Lin Zi Yan’s lips curled into a smile, and although with her wealth she could get all the pills she wanted, she was still touched by Ye Wei’s gesture and kind heart.

After handing over the pills, Ye Wei started collecting the cold-marrow jade on the floor; they were just floor tiles in this house, but they are worth quite a bit outside.

A few banging noises came from the corridor, and the house was shaken. Someone was attacking the barrier from the outside, just as Lin Zi Yan expected. If she wasn’t there to block the entrance with a stance, they would have already entered the stone house.

Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan gave each other the same look, both of them could feel that the intruders were strong, and they had to get ready for a fight.

“Bang! Bang!”

The stone house was shaken a couple more times, and Lin Zi Yan’s defensive stance was neutralized with a rumbling noise.

Four silhouettes appeared behind the dusty entrance, and they slowly

entered the room then scanned around. They could feel the cold and see the jade tiles. The jade was not just a luxurious decoration, this was a pill room. The temperature was lowered intentionally to keep the bottles of pills in peak condition.

There was no pills in sight, all they could see was a boy and a girl. Their pupils dilated and their greedy glare intensified; all eye bloodshot eyes were now on Lin Zi Yan and Ye Wei.

“Give us the pills, and we will spare your lives!” All four of them were wearing light blue robes and blocking the entrance like a blue wall. Seeing that all four of them were Warriors, and knowing that Lin Zi Yan’s defensive stance would take more than one person to neutralize, they knew it would be a tough fight.

Chapter 65 – Bulwark

From the surprise of acquiring the valuable pills to facing the four Warriors, Ye Wei's countenance changed dramatically, and judging by the pressure he could sense, each of them were stronger than himself.

Handing over the valuable pills was out of the question, and Ye Wei did not reach for the pills in his interspatial bag, he was looking for the Mystic scrolls. His small movements did not escape Lin Zi Yan's eyes, she held Ye Wei's hand in place and slightly shook her head.

Lin Zi Yan then turned to look at the four warriors, and a flash of purple appeared in her eyes which helped her read their cultivation level. She could tell their cultivation in one glance. The two of them in the middle were five star Warriors whereas the other two on each side were four star Warriors.

Without warning, the four star Warriors quickly stepped forward and lifted their hands as strings of glittering light came out of their fingers. “Give us the pills!”

“In your dreams!” Lin Zi Yan grunted. Her will-force and Qi rushed out of her body simultaneously towards her finger using this she finished drawing a sequence of runes before the four star Warriors could.

“You asked for this! Don't blame us if you die!” The Warriors shouted, and they flicked their fingers releasing two dark, three-inch rune daggers towards Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan. They penetrated the cold air in the room and parted the thin mist above the floor into three sections while

cracking the jade tiles.

The daggers were homing in; they got close enough for Ye Wei to feel how sharp the rune daggers' edges were.

This was the moment Lin Zi Yan was waiting for. She placed her hand on Ye Wei's shoulder then injected Qi into the rune sequence. The stance activated and a cloud of light appeared around her.

“Shadowshift!”

The stance turned Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan into shadows while leaving holograms of the two where they stood. With a burst of speed, they escaped the stone house before any of the four Warriors noticed.

The piercing rune daggers went through the holograms and landed on the wall behind them. “That stance was not a shield those are holograms!” But they realized what happened too late and the four blue robed Warriors' smiles dissolved. Blinded by rage, they then started to hysterically scream while searching the house for Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan. They had completely eliminated the possibility of them escaping the house as they thought the door was well guarded.

They started arguing and blaming each other, and the shouting was shaking the house and echoed into the tunnel. None of them could get over the fact that a girl and a skinny boy got away from them so easily with their treasure, the resentment was maddening.

“Zi Yan, what stance was that?” Ye Wei asked Zi Yan as they blended

into the crowd in the tunnel heading deeper into the Bloodmist catacombs.

“Mid-level Spirit stance Shadowshift, it’s not anything fancy really. Would you like to learn it? When you’re a seven star Student, I will teach you it!” Lin Zi Yan said laughingly at Ye Wei’s shocked face. He was still trying to figure out the mechanics of the Shadowshift stance.

“Yea!” Ye Wei nodded without the slightest hesitation. The stance was not a powerful one, but its practicality made it a valuable asset for whoever could master it. It was usable both offensively and defensively, and of course for escaping as Zi Yan just demonstrated.

There are billions of stances, each one of them takes a lot of practice to master, and each one of them was invented for a special niche. A common cultivator could master around forty stances during his whole life; therefore, it was wise to pick up something he saw a use for.

“Yea that would be nice, but I need to get to seven star level quickly!” Ye Wei took a Silver Moon pill out of his bag, then put it into his mouth. The pill melted in his mouth and entered his body as a warm surge of energy found its way into his meridians then traveled to his Sentient.

Lin Zi Yan took a Silver Moon pill too. Although it’s a common practice to sit down and cultivate after taking quencher pills to absorb the energy efficiently, they could also use their effects to move around quicker thus increasing the chance of them finding what they needed in the tunnels.

Ye Wei’s body was still taking in the pill’s effects despite being on the move which strengthening his physique. Ye Wei absorbed only about

thirty percent of the Silver Moon pill's effect, and his dantian and Sentient were rumbling more vigorously than when he took the Fiery Sun Quencher.

He was overjoyed, but he didn't show that on his face. 'I can become a five star Student in a day with the help of these pills. Although I might not be able to use stances, I can still try to create my own and refine them to improve my Sentient!'

The three meters wide tunnel was a mess. People were swarming in and out of the stone houses on the sides, and there were brawls everywhere. With such proximity, it was impossible not to know when others had found treasure, and it was unavoidable people would fight over them. Laws and rules don't really apply in places like Bloodmist Valley.

Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan, however, did not need to involve themselves in the madness, for ordinary people it was not an easy thing to crack the rune barriers. The couple worked out a system; Lin Zi Yin was responsible for creating smoke screens with her stances and general security while Ye Wei would crack the barriers and take what was inside the stone houses. Within a few hours, Ye Wei's Interspatial pouch was filled with treasures and rare goods.

They came across a wide variety of herbs, pills, medicines, and even found some Qi crystals, but they couldn't find any Welkin Leaves.

The tunnel went deep underground. The length of it meant it was impossible to search each and every stone houses, and bearing that in mind Lin Zi Yan was starting to think they should go deeper into the tunnel where the area might be less contested. Then they could take their

time searching instead of having to worry about defending themselves all the time.

But she was not the first nor the only person with such idea. A few hundred more experienced Warriors were already further down the tunnel. Lin Zi Yan and Ye Wei found themselves in a pretty much empty section of the tunnel.

A rune barrier vibrated then Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan came through the wall finished searching another stone house. “Nothing too special here either!” The term special has since lost its meaning because the things they got their hands on were incredibly valuable, but just were not what they were here for.

The trip would be pretty much meaningless unless they found what Master Yi told them they needed to get ahold of.

“We should head towards the end of the tunnel and see what’s happening down there, and hope there is still something left for us.” Lin Zi Yan said slightly nervously as she realized they might have been too late.

‘It was definitely a statue of a Selenic spirit beast, even a ton of Welkin Leaves cannot compare to the real treasure we could find here if this place is what I think it is.’ There was a ghostly purple fire in Lin Zi Yan’s eyes as her mind wandered. ‘If Ning City sent people here, they would most likely be after those.’ It was getting hard for Ye Wei to catch up as she was running quicker and quicker.

About an hour passed, and the tunnel was starting to widen the pair

had been running at Ye Wei's full speed this entire time. Their path was getting brighter, and they started to hear noises echoing in the tunnel which indicated they were reaching the end. They looked at each other while slowing down their pace making sure their steps weren't heard.

The tunnel led them to a spacious hall. It was at least a few times wider than the Ye family arena. All the tunnels actually led to the same place like streams and rivers flowing into the sea.

Lin Zi Yan had a glance at the place and noticed there were at least three thousand people who made it here.

Luo Wu Xue, Lu Chao, Hong Jun, and Xue Yao were right on the frontlines. They stood in the middle of the hall right in front of a hundred meter tall round rune shield that protected the temple from any external disturbance.

The temple was not the only thing under the shiny shield. A lot of weapons, shields, and armors were suspended in mid-air, and a lot of these goods had a shine on them that indicated they weren't ordinary artifacts.

The people in the hall were too focused on the shield, so Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan snuck in unnoticed. They were discussing how to break through the rune shield. In their minds, they were clear that as long as the shield stood, they didn't have a chance to lay their hands on those treasures. Now it was the time to work together instead of killing each other.

The strongest Warriors on the scene including Lou, Lu, Hong, and Xue

adjusted their positioning and started drawing runes in the air.

Fire, ice, wind, Qi swords, and spirit beasts crashed into the shield in a matter of seconds. They all focused their fire on where they estimated the weak spot to be. But the light shield bounced the attacks off instantaneously.

The arranged attack created some ripples on the shield, but that was all. The rune shield was not damaged in the slightest.

“That’s pretty far off...” The purple light in Lin Zi Yan’s eyes intensified, and she sighed and shook her head.

The effort was repeated by the group of elite Warriors at the hall, but the situation remained the same. The only difference was now the Warriors looked tired and drained.

Chapter 66 – Prodigies

Not only did the light shield kept them from reaching the treasures they could see levitating in the air, but it also blocked the pathways that led towards the depths of this Bloodmist Labyrinth.

“Didn’t somebody say that the Ning City folks are here with us? Where are they?”

“What should we do now?”

This was the furthest anyone has been into the labyrinth in decades, and if someone did not disable the shield, then this would be the end of the expedition. People started to speculate and try to figure a way to push further into the mysterious depths of the Bloodmist Labyrinth.

Lin Zi Yan scanned the hall, and she sensed quite a lot of outstanding individual, but she knew that none of them would be strong enough to break the enormous runic barrier, not even Luo Wu Xue, who was the strongest.

“These attacks mean nothing. The only chance of breaking through is to have multiple people who know how to focus all their power onto the barrier’s weak spot while striking it simultaneously! It would only take a few strong Warriors to get the job done!”

Lin Zi Yan was getting a little bit frustrated because she knew she couldn’t break the shield on her own. She was under the suspicion that Ye Wei could actually open the rune barrier without breaking a sweat by

fiddling with the breakpoint like he had on the earlier rune barriers. However, she was not going to let him draw any attention to himself, especially not here at the Bloodmist Valley.

‘Whoever set this rune barrier up must be a very, very strong cultivator...’ Ye Wei was startled by the rune shield. As he observed the rune and energy flow of it, something became clear to him.

‘When the creator of the shield set it up, he didn’t make it hard to break; the complexity of this shield vastly exceeds the strength of it. Had he put more Qi into the shield, it might actually take a Prime to break through!’

This was an inspiring experience for Ye Wei. He had never seen a rune sequence this complex before. The shield taught him a thing or two about rune synergies and combinations, but he was still a bit confused as to why the creator did not build the defense system to its fullest potential.

Just as Ye Wei was deep in his own world, an aqua blue light intensified at the exit of one of the tunnels while a sharp noise of something breaking through the air at a high speed was getting louder.

Seconds after, a blue flash shot out of the tunnel into the hall which then levitated above the thousands. It silenced the crowd as everyone was in awe and trying to figure out what the blue light was.

Ye Wei was no exception; he lifted his head to see a fading blue light. As the light died down, a hovering ancient, ice-blue sword appeared in front of his eyes and on the sword stood a teenager wearing a blue robe.

He didn't look a day older than sixteen, and he was standing straight with his hands behind his back. His long hair came to rest as he stopped mid-air.

This blue robed teenager looked down calmly on the crowd below. "That's Mo Ya from Ning City!" Luo Mu Xue's pupils dilated, and his face twitched, he remembered this face.

'Why is he here? The treasures in the Bloodmist Valley shouldn't be that attractive to him...' All of the four strongest group leaders shared the same thought; they were agitated by Mo Ya's presence.

"Mo Ya?" Ye Wei turned to Lin Zi Yan. He could guess that Mo Ya was a renown person but having lived in Green Moon City his whole life, he had no idea who this teenager was – him who silenced the crowd of thousands without speaking a word. Back in his junior class at South Star Academy all they talked about was what was happening in their local city.

"Mo Ya is one of the four strongest teenagers in Ning City; he is only sixteen years old, but he's already a ten star Warrior. He is famous for beating another well known ten star Warrior with a single sword strike in a dual!"

'Sixteen years old and as strong as my uncles...' Ye Wei was astonished by how big the world was. He never imagined that talents like this existed.

"That sword under his feet..." Ye Wei was curious about the hovering

sword.

“Medium grade three stars Mystic Arm.” Li Zi Yan knew what Ye Wei was going to ask and answered calmly.

“What?” Ye Wei eyes widened. “Are you sure?” He could not believe a teenager would carry such a valuable treasure around. “Is he not afraid of getting attacked and mugged?” He frowned and whispered in an envious tone. He was afraid that Mo Ya was going to hear him.

“With that sword, he can fight condensed prime Warriors to a draw anytime, and maybe even come out on top. People who are capable of mugging him don’t really have a reason to. Unless, they feel like declaring war against the Mo family; who are one of the four biggest families in Ning City.” Lin Zi Yan replied.

“Don’t be intimidated little Wei, you’re a talented boy. I believe that you will be able to catch up with them sooner or later!” Lin Zi Yan read Ye Wei’s facial expressions like an open book.

“Ha Ha Ha! Mo Ya, do you enjoy showing off in front of a large group of trash? That’s classy!” A booming voice caught the attention of the crowd as they were admiring Mo Ya’s godly aura.

This loud voice echoed through the hall, and some of the weaker cultivators in the crowd turned as pale as a sheet and started bleeding from their ears. Ye Wei was affected too. The thundering laugh shook him inside and out. Lin Zi Yan saw that and therefore placed her small hand on his shoulder to strengthen him with a surge of Qi. This lifted the pressure off his body, and his face slowly regained color.

‘I thought you just broke into the Warrior ranks not long ago... Are you hiding from me?’ Ye Wei could see that Lin Zi Yan was not affected by the Qi powered voice at all while the stronger Warriors who were trying to break the shield were struggling to even stand up straight.

As the laugh died down people started to look towards the tunnels where it came from. A golden flash shot out of the tunnel’s exit where everyone was looking, as another overbearing presence entered the hall.

While Mo Ya’s presence was cold and elegant, this man’s entrance was more violent. The crowd was already afraid of him before he showed his face. The golden light dimmed before everyone’s eyes, and a muscular teenager with rugged hair revealed himself. He was levitating in the air and holding a golden spear.

He arrogantly glanced around, and his gaze itself was like a spear that penetrated people’s souls. “Jin Yan!” Luo Wu Xue knew this gaze, and it caused him to shiver nervously as he tightened his grip. Drops of cold sweat dripped from his hand onto the ground. Being number one in Frozen Sun City caused Luo Wu Xue to be very prideful but standing in front of these two from Ning City he felt worthless. He was breathing heavily while shaking.

“First, it was the Selenic beast statue... Now these two are here! I think that confirms it. This is probably the Frost King’s tomb!” Lin Zi Yan mumbled.

“The Jin’s let you out of Searing Valley? And you were given Burning Gold, looks like the geezers in your family have great expectations from

you!” Mo Ya’s eyes stopped on the ten-meter long spear then at Jin Yan as he indifferently chuckled.

“You have Autumn’s Grace with you too. It looks like we were both sent on the same mission, huh?” Jin Yan said in an unfriendly tone as he flexed his firm muscles and stared at the sword under Mo Ya’s feet.

“Well, I feel kind of lucky that they sent you here. I can’t imagine how much fun I would have, and how long it will take to break this rune shield if I have to work with these people!” Mo Ya shrugged and replied sarcastically.

Jin Yan’s eyes followed Mo Ya’s as they looked at the rune barrier. They had a concerned expression on their face as they felt the energy that it was emitting, and although they were pretty confident about breaking it, they weren’t sure if they were ready to face whoever was powerful enough to set this shield up.

Chapter 67 – Iron Talisman

“Let’s cut the small talk; we need to break the runic barrier together!”

Jin Yan stared at the light shield, and his eyes lit up with enthusiasm as he thought about the item he was told to retrieve from the depths of Bloodmist Valley. He extended his arms and started swinging his spear in a circle, injecting a large amount of Qi into Burning Gold activating the stance within.

The runes on the tip of the spear started to shine, and the bright light intensified transforming into a thirty-meter long spectral spear. It then shot out towards the light shield.

Like Mo Ya’s Autumn’s Grace, Jin Yan’s Burning Gold was a three-star medium-grade Mystic Arm. The stance he just activated was a peak-level Myst stance, and for the Students and Warriors in the hall seeing Jin Yan using a stance as powerful as their own patriarch’s stances was quite shocking. They admired the power, but at the same time were afraid of it.

The golden spectral spear was giving off a pressure wave that radiated in all directions, and suddenly everyone felt like there was a rock pressing on their head making it hard to breathe.

The spectral spear gave off a screeching rumble as it broke through the air, even the roof was shaken and pieces of stones rained down.

“Is it my turn now?” Mo Ya, who was still standing on his sword, said as he channeled Qi without moving a muscle. The energy he emitted

created a small whirlwind around him, causing his hair to flow with the wind as he transferred his Qi down to his feet thus activating the stance in the sword.

Upon activation, Autumn's Grace shone with a bright green light and sequences of runes rushed out of the blade forming an enormous cyan-colored spirit sword. The sword then tore through the air towards the shield with unstoppable momentum.

People had mixed feelings about these two attempting to break the barrier. On the one hand, they wanted it broken so they could progress further into the labyrinth, but on the other they didn't want their leaders to look like idiots. It will be humiliating if just these two from Ning City could finish a job they had been working on for hours.

Ye Wei's eyes were set on the two fearsome stances in the air like everyone else. The screeches from the spear and the sword were the only audible sound in the hall as people were quietly witnessing the stances rushing towards the massive rune barrier.

The heat emitted by the stances warmed the air creating a ripple effect. It was this moment when the light shield reacted as if it could sense a threat and lit up brighter.

It didn't just get brighter, but the runes within started to come alive as they rotated around and strengthened the shield.

Jin Yan's golden spirit spear landed first, and its tip crushed onto one small point close to the middle of the shield. Its force was so focused that it pierced a tiny hole into the seemingly unbreakable shield. The impact

sent ripples across the shield causing its strength to weaken.

The shield stood as the spear faded; it was still unbroken, but now its shine was dimmer. Just as the spear disappeared, Mo Ya's stance struck on the same weak point Ji Yan's spirit spear just left on the barrier.

Slowly but sure the sword pierced through the shield. Mo Ya seized the opportunity, and he calmly looked at the spirit sword and grunted. As his grunt echoed in the hall, the spirit sword shattered on his command. It turned into thousands of little swords that spun like a tornado as they expanded and ate the shield. It wasn't long before the shield lost its structural strength and shattered into pieces.

People's eyes went widened when they saw how easy Mo Ya and Jin Yan broke the shield. But their appreciation was short lived. After a few cheers, they shifted from looking at what's left of the shield to the treasures behind it.

Most of the levitating treasures were held in the air by the shield's energy, and once the barrier broke all the items starting falling to the ground. All except ten of them. These dazzling pieces were floating by their own energy.

Seven of them glowed black, and three of them glowed green. "Mystic Arms!" The crowd went wild. They were here for treasures, but they didn't imagine they would see medium grade Mystic Arms.

Crazed with greed, people were breathing heavily, staring at the Mystic Arms aggressively and seemingly ready to take other's lives for the treasures.

Lin Zi Yan was a bit calmer than the others. Her eyes were set on the leftmost medium grade Mystic Arm, a purple-gold chiffon cloak. It had tiny runes flowing on each thread of the garment.

While everyone else had their eyes on the ten Mystic Arms in the air, Ye Wei couldn't take his eyes off a rusty little iron talisman that fell to the ground. His Sentient started to glow as it reacted to the sight of it. It filled his body with Qi and will-force.

The iron talisman looked beat up and old, and it was just quietly laying on the floor. Nobody was paying the piece of junk any mind.

“What is this iron talisman?” Ye Wei widened his eyes in shock. He couldn't believe his body would react just by looking at this ordinary item. Supposedly, it was more attractive than the Mystic Arms to him.

“I have to have this!” Ye Wei mumbled while he clenched his fist. He couldn't quite explain the desire, but he was hopelessly drawn to that rusty trinket.

There were a lot of powerful fighters in the hall, but most of them had their eyes set on the Mystic Arms, almost nobody noticed what Ye Wei saw. That means it was actually possible for him to acquire the item. Furthermore, he was even ready to use his mystic scrolls if that's what it took.

The atmosphere in the hall became a little strange. Moments ago they were united by the same cause wanting to break the shield together, but now that the treasures were within everyone's reach they started to keep

a distance from each other as they saw everyone as competition instead of comrades.

Without Jin Yan and Mo Ya's presence, the crowd would have already turned into a brawl. People were afraid of the two from Ning City; thus, they waited for them to make the first move.

"Ha, you guys are pretty respectful!" Mo Ya looked down to find the crowd was anticipating him and Jin Yan's action.

"What a shame! If these trash actually dared to go wild, I would have an excuse to crush some skulls!" Jin Yan said indifferently. Although he was a bloodthirsty teenager who didn't really care about anyone in the hall, he restrained himself from unnecessary bloodshed.

The crowd knew Mo Ya and Jin Yan could easily wipe them out, and as much as they wanted the treasure they valued their lives more. That respect and fear might just have saved their lives.

"These three medium grade Mystic Arms are off limits! But the rest... you guys can fight for them if you wish!" Jin Yan chuckled and shouted to the crowd. "Go!"

As Jin Yan's words echoed in the hall, the greed-crazed crowd ran towards the treasures, and their bloodshot eyes were set on the seven low-grade Mystic Arms.

Lin Zi Yan's eyes darted to Ye Wei, "Little Wei, you must follow me be no more than a hundred meters away. I have to get that Mystic Arm; it

cannot fall into anyone's hands but mine!" She said calmly as she channeled her energy, and her will-force rushed out of her Sentient to her entire body. Her Qi wrapped tightly around her skin, and she appeared to be covered by a layer of purple flame.

"Zi Yan, don't worry about me; I have to do something here!" Ye Wei didn't want to burden Lin Zi Yan, and she looked determined. Furthermore, the iron talisman was nowhere close to where Lin Zi Yan was heading.

Ye Wei knew Lin Zi Yan was hiding her true strength, but he couldn't imagine she would actually go and compete with Jin Yan and Mo Ya for a medium grade Mystic Arms.

Lin Zi Yan was in a hurry, and although she cared about Ye Wei like no other, she had to get to Jin Yan and Mo Ya before it was too late. "Please take care of yourself! If you find yourself in any kind of danger, just use the scrolls!" She knew if Ye Wei were to use the scrolls, he would be relatively safe if he wasn't crazy enough to pick a fight with someone as strong as Mo Ya or Jin Yan.

"I understand! Just do what you have to!" Ye Wei answered and leaped towards the iron talisman.

Lin Zi Yan's body disappeared. She used the Shadowshift stance to get herself close to the medium grade Mystic Arms.

A brawl broke out as Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan headed separate ways, the hall was filled with the smell of blood. As Ye Wei expected, the whole crowd was heading towards the seven low-grade Mystic Arms, and only a

few of them were actually running towards the less desired items on the ground.

“I’ve got this!” Ye Wei was relieved that there were no Warriors on the way to contest him. He clenched his fist and transferred some Qi to his feet to speed up.

Although he had no idea what the rusty talisman was, anything that could excite his Sentient would not be ordinary.

Chapter 68 – Purple Chiffon

Ye Wei looked around him, and there were three Students heading in the same direction he was.

“Get out of the way!” They said furiously in unison aware that they were in no position to contest with the others for the Mystic Arms, so they settled for the idea of getting some ordinary items instead.

As they approached, Ye Wei threw three consecutive punches towards them in a flash. Although none of them connected, the Students were forced to take a few steps back to dodge the fierce strikes.

“How dare you!”

“You are just a Student, and you’re picking a fight with us three?” The three-star Students channeled their Qi, which turned their skin green and with their empowered green fists they stuck ruthlessly towards Ye Wei.

The fists simultaneously flew towards Ye Wei’s back, left shoulder, and right arm from behind him. He felt the approaching threat and bent his body forward to dodge the attacks as he launched himself forward towards the iron talisman.

Ye Wei just wanted the talisman, and he didn’t want to fight so he threw the punches just to buy himself some extra time.

Ye Wei's evasion did not surprise the three Students, but the item that he launched himself towards did. They couldn't believe he was after a rusty piece of trash.

They looked at each other and laughed, "Just leave him then!" The leader of the three shouted as they ran towards the single edged sword lying not far from the iron talisman. 'What an idiot, you could have taken this weapon instead.' He chuckled as he got his hand on the piece of well forged rare metal; it was worth at least a few thousand silver.

"It's mine!" Ye Wei shouted as his hand was three inches from his target. He felt the cold iron on his fingertips, and he also felt something sharp approaching from behind.

It was a familiar feeling. Three sharp Qi daggers tore through the air towards his hand at a fearsome speed, and luckily for Ye Wei, he noticed them before it was too late. He swiftly pulled his hand backwards.

Ye Wei didn't lose his hand, but the daggers did graze it. He held his bleeding hand and looked towards where the attacks came from. "It's you!" Ye Wei narrowed his eyes. He recognized those faces, 'The people from the first stone house we had entered.'

He knew he was in for trouble when he saw the four Warriors who were staring at him furiously. This time, Lin Zi Yan was not by his side. He immediately reached for his interspatial bag; if they make another move, Ye Wei would use a scroll without hesitation.

"You are four Warriors, why aren't you guys after the Mystic Arms instead of bullying me?" He knew how valuable the scrolls were, and

although he would use them if the situation requires him to, he was still trying to talk himself out of this mess.

“Because we can! Now give us the pills you took from the stone house then we will leave you be!” The strongest one of them said with a greedy smile on his face.

They considered fighting for the Mystic Arms, but as they were deciding if it was worth it to risk their lives fighting the stronger Warriors, they spotted Ye Wei. ‘It’s safer to get the pills off this weakling!’ They all had the same thought, and they were actually still angry that Ye Wei and Lin Zi Yan got away from them; therefore, they opted for the less risky course of action.

“So I guess you aren’t going to back off?” Ye Wei grabbed the iron talisman with his right hand and took a green scroll out of the bag with his left.

“A Myst scroll!” One of the Warriors told the rest of the group as his eyes caught the green glow. His friends’ eyes widened, and their smiles disappeared.

‘How did he get a hold of this scroll?’ They were starting to be afraid, ‘We can’t deal with a Myst stance, and if the scroll was given to him by his family then we really can’t deal with the consequences of hurting him if news of it got out of the valley... That girl from earlier was probably his bodyguard!’

“Sorry! This is just a misunderstanding! We’ll be on our way.” They were smart enough not to start a fight with someone with a powerful

background. After a brief apology, they turned away to see if they could find other treasures in the chaos. “We can’t go back empty-handed! Let’s go.”

“Phew!” Ye Wei was relieved. He was glad that the one use Mystic scroll protected him more efficiently than he expected. He then looked at the cold iron talisman and ground his teeth, ‘I don’t know what you can do, but you’re mine!’ Just as he was about to inspect the item, he remembered that Lin Zi Yan was still out there. He threw the talisman in his bag and started looking for her.

Not willing to be involved in the crazy brawl, Ye Wei retreated to the edge of the hall.

‘Where are you?’ He was worried for Lin Zi Yan as it looked like she was going for the medium-grade Arms where Jin Yan and Mo Ya were. ‘I know she is very strong, but both Jin Yan and Mo Ya are ten-star Warriors armed with powerful weapons whereas Zi Yan is unarmed!’ He started to panic because he couldn’t locate her in the chaos.

As Ye Wei was jumping and struggling to get a glimpse of what was happening at the front, Zi Yan’s Shadowshift stance had already got her through the crowd to the frontlines where Luo Wu Xue, Lu Chao, Hong Xun, and Xue Yao were, but she was not planning to stop there. While those four were after the low-grade Arms, she wanted more.

In the air, Jin Yan and Mo Ya were staring at each other wondering if the other was going to back off.

“There are three Mystic Arms and two of us. How do we share them?”

Jin Yan clenched his fist and broke the silence.

“Finders keepers!” Mo Ya replied calmly; he was not intimidated by Jin Yan’s flamboyance.

Although these items were not what they came to Bloodmist Valley for, they were not going to just give them up.

“Exactly what I wanted to hear!” Jin Yan chuckled and activated the stance in his spear, but this time, he held the spear close to his body letting the runes from the Mystic Arm wrap around him.

He and the spear merged together momentarily, and then he flew down towards the three medium-grade arms. Meanwhile, Mo Ya on his sword flew swiftly in the same direction. The pressure wave from the two descending Warriors was felt by everyone within a radius of a hundred meters. All but five Warriors were knocked back by the Ning City duo. Unsurprisingly they were Lin Zi Yan, Luo Wu Xue, Lu Chao, Hong Xun, and Xue Yao.

Lu Chao and Xue Yao were only seven-star Warriors, and their faces went pale as they met the pressure wave. They channeled their Qi to strengthen their bodies and raised their arms hoping to deflect some of the impact. Sadly, their defenses didn’t do much as their feet were pushed deep into the ground. Hong Xun, on the other hand, used a stance just as the impact swept by; the sequence of runes formed a golden bell that shielded him, leaving him relatively unharmed.

Only Lin Zi Yan and Luo Wu Xue could take the impact without too much effort.

‘I am the best student in my school! And the strongest young man in my city! Looks like the world is much bigger than I thought it was’ Luo Wu Xue thought as his face turned pale. It was now far whiter than it usually was. Despite the pressure, the Qi on his feet kept him steady.

Lu Wu Xue turned to look at Lin Zi Yan, and she was standing strong as if nothing happened. There was not a drop of sweat on her face nor was there the slightest trace of panic. Her whole body was covered in a purple flame, and her eyes shone violet as well.

‘I’ve been overestimating myself this whole time.’ He turned around and didn’t even try to go for the less contested low-grade arms. ‘I will challenge you two when I become stronger!’ Luo Wu Xue was shamed by Jin Yan and Mo Ya’s power. He swore to train harder and left the hall without looking back.

“I underestimated you.” She whispered as she admired Luo Wu Xue’s judgment. It was a wise move to swallow his pride as he could actually lose his life if he decided to compete with her, Jin Yan, and Mo Ya.

While he turned away, Jin Yan and Mo Ya were already next to the Mystic Arms. Jin Yan picked up the compass on the right while Mo Ya took the feather fan in the middle. Once they each took an item, they simultaneously cast their attention onto the purple chiffon cloak.

Chapter 69 – Deeper

Mo Ya and Jin Yan reached out for the cloak at the same time but Mo Ya, being slightly stronger of the two, reached it before Jin Yan could.

Mo Ya's lips curled into a smug smile, and as he was about to grab the cloak, a cheeky grin appeared on Jin Yan's face. Suddenly, a green scroll appeared in Jin Yan's hand.

He tore the Mystic scroll and released a thousand runes long sequence in the air. The runes shone, spun, and transformed into a black mink. Its fur was shiny, and there was static electricity on its hair covering its body. This was nothing other than a terrifying Lightning Mink.

Famed for its speed, the Lightning Mink was a powerful Myst stance that even condensed prime Warriors could not easily deal with due to the runic mink's agility.

Just as Mo Ya's hand touched the purple chiffon cloak, the runic mink appeared in front of him and bit him hard with its razor sharp teeth. The bite together with being shocked by the mink caused him to loosen his grip. But the mink didn't stop attacking. It quickly climbed up Mo Ya's sleeve and continued biting and scratching him as he took a step back attempting to rid himself of the mink by shaking his body.

Mo Ya's face turned ashen after shaking off the runic creature with great effort. He took a few steps away making sure he was safe from the mink's relentless attacks at least momentarily. Although the electric mink was from a scroll and weaker than its true form when used by a

condensed prime Warrior, the speedy strikes even weakened were not to be taken casually, not even for Mo Ya.

“You are not stingy at all! Are you?” Mo Ya didn’t expect Jin Yan to use a scroll that cost at least a hundred thousand silver.

“It’s just a scroll! I’m getting a medium-grade Mystic Arm in return. I think it is definitely worth it!” Jin Yan flicked his sleeves while laughed at Mo Ya and slowly reached for the purple-gold cloak.

Just as Jin Yan fingers touched the cloak, he heard a sweet voice. “This is my cloak!” Then a slender hand appeared in front of him, and one of the delicate fingers from this hand curled and flicked forward onto the back of Jin Yan’s hand.

When Lin Zi Yan’s finger landed on Jin Yan’s hand, he felt like his hand was struck by a bolt of lightning. His whole body shook, and he reflexly pulled his arm backwards.

The prideful smile on his face instantly disappeared. He looked down at his trembling hand and shouted, “Who are you!?” He couldn’t believe someone other than Mo Ya was strong enough to contest for these medium-grade Mystic Arms.

Jin Yan widened his eyes then cautiously hid his numb hand behind his back while staring at Lin Zi Yan. She was kneeling and folding the cloak up then put it in her bag. He tried to hide the fact that he was surprised, but seeing the person was a small girl he couldn’t accept his defeat.

All of this did not escape Mo Ya's eyes as he got rid of the mink. He saw how Jin Yan was stopped by a discrete finger flick, and he too was surprised to see the intrusion of this unknown person. His eyes were fixed on her as she stood up. Just as he was confused trying to guess her identity, Mo Ya made a brief moment of eye contact with Lin Zi Yan.

When he saw her purple eyes, his face twitched. He gasped and went through shock, euphoria, and fear within seconds.

Without consulting Jin Yan, Mo Ya said, "Yea, you can take this cloak!" He took a deep breath and regained his cool. At this moment, Jin Yan's opinion didn't matter to him anymore.

"Bullshit! I broke the barrier with you Mo Ya! Why are you on her side? She didn't even help us? Listen girl! You better hand the cloak back before I lose my temper!" Jin Yan said in a cold tone as he furiously stared at Lin Zi Yan. He was clearly annoyed by Mo Ya's reaction.

'I worked together with Mo Ya to break the shield and even used a medium-grade Mystic scroll to get this cloak, and you're going to sneak up on me and take my treasure out of nowhere?! Do you have a death wish?' Jin Yan knew that Lin Zi Yan was strong, but with his spear he was confident. He believed that he could take on anyone in this Bloodmist Labyrinth. 'I'm not afraid of anyone; I've fought condensed prime Warriors with this spear in my hand! I'm not going to let anyone disrespect me, especially not a girl!' Lin Zi Yan exposed Jin Yan's sensitive side.

"I would have broken the barrier myself, but you two just got to it first. Don't glorify yourself and make it sound like a harder task than it really was." Lin Zi Yan said coldly. She frowned and turned around to stare at

Jin Yan.

The moment Lin Zi Yan's purple eyes set on Jin Yan, he felt like he was being strangled. He wanted to speak, but words just would not come out. His lips went pale and were shaking in awe when he saw the hue of her pupils.

“You are...” What Mo Ya said suddenly made sense to Jin Yan now that he could see Lin Zi Yan's eyes for himself. ‘Mo Ya... Mo Ya was right. You can have the cloak.’

Everyone saw how Lin Zi Yan appeared out of nowhere and took on the infamous geniuses from Ning City. To take a medium-grade Mystic Arm off their hands by only using one finger, and then to have the advantage in a standoff with them... ‘Are Mo Ya and Jin Yan afraid of her?! People don't just give medium-grade Mystic Arms away!’

The spectators were shocked and started to wonder where this girl was the whole time while everyone had been trying to break the shield. And that if she was strong enough to take things off Jin Yan's hands, how had she managed to keep such a low profile before.

“Correct me if I am wrong, but you two are not here for these Mystic Arms?” Lin Zi Yan clicked her fingers to interrupt Jin Yan from possibly revealing her identity. Then she shifted her focus to two paths at the back of the hall behind where the shield used to be.

After hearing what Lin Zi Yan said Jin Yan and Mo Ya went quiet. They looked at each other and narrowed their eyes. To Lin Zi Yan their frowns were good enough answers. Medium-grade Arms were valuable, but

comparing to what the Ning City duo were after in this Bloodmist Labyrinth, these items were nothing.

Seeing Mo Ya place his hand on the hilt of Autumn's Grace and Jin Yan tightening his grip on the spear, it became apparent to Lin Zi Yan that their generosity only went as far as handing her the cloak. It was obvious that they did not want to share the real treasure they sought.

The atmosphere became heavy, and all the cultivators who were close stopped fighting over the low-grade Mystic Arms and stepped away from Lin Zi Yan, Mo Ya, and Jin Yan. They could sense that a colossal fight could break out any second and did not want to become collateral damage. As the crowd quieted down, Ye Wei could finally see where Lin Zi Yan was, and he was worried sick seeing the three of them in a standoff.

Lin Zi Yan could see Ye Wei too. She looked at him then rolled her eyes slowly towards the direction of the exit, signaling that he should leave this place.

Then she turned back to Mo Ya and Jin Yan, "Is this what you want? A fight?" She asked with a beckoning smile on her face as the purple flame in her eyes burned brighter. "Let's play catch instead!" She calmly glared at Mo Ya and Jin Yan then turned around and ran towards the rightmost path that led into the depths of the labyrinth.

Her Shadowshift stance brought her to the path's entrance in no time, and the only thing that stopped her from proceeding was yet another barrier. She gently exhaled and blew on her right hand, coating it with a layer of purple Qi. The barrier softened at her touch, and she was walked right through it. 'Don't worry little Wei; I will get you what you need!'

Just get out here safe and remember to use your scrolls if you're in danger...’

Just as she went through the barrier, it lit up and became rigid again blocking the passage.

Ye Wei started to wonder what it was that drew Lin Zi Yan, Mo Ya, and Jin Yan’s interest. He was just here for the Welkin Leaves and did not expect he would be left alone by Lin Zi Yan.

Mo Ya released his tight grip and lowered his sword while he spoke to Jin Yan. “Interesting, I think us two may have to work together for the time being!” They both wanted to chase Lin Zi Yan but couldn’t match her speed.

“Pfft! I want to see if people from that family are strong as rumored!” Jin Yan grunted and said proudly. He followed Mo Ya towards the path to the right, and they walked through the barrier as effortlessly as Lin Zi Yan had.

As the three disappeared into the depths of the labyrinth, the cultivators in the hall started fighting again. The floor quickly became covered in blood, and if one were to fall to the ground, it would be the end for them.

Chapter 70 – Effigies

On the far edge of the hall, Ye Wei was at a standstill worrying about Lin Zi Yan's safety after she disappeared down the path that led into the deeper parts of the labyrinth. He could tell that Mo Ya and Jin Yan could pose a threat to her if they decided to somehow work together against her.

Ye Wei could not stop thinking about it. Both of the Ning City Warriors possessed a medium-grade Mystic Arm. He wanted to follow her down the path, but he thought about the difference he could actually make and who would be protecting who if he was to join Lin Zi Yan in venturing deeper into the labyrinth.

‘I’ve wasted too much time in the past... I will just burden her if I go in.’ Ye Wei again became bitter as his mind wandered.

“I have to become a seven-star Student as soon as possible. Maybe there will be something in this labyrinth, pills or some kind of medicine that could help me get there.” Ye Wei mumbled to himself. “When I can start creating and refining stances, I’m sure I will be able to catch up!” He clenched his fist determinedly.

‘Should I really follow Zi Yan’s advice and leave this place? She led me all the way here to Bloodmist Valley, and now she’s heading even further in. She signaled me to leave, so I should trust her to find the Welkin Leaves, right? But I can’t always rely on her. I can’t hide behind her back when she takes all the risks!’ The recent incidents with Lin Zi Yan made Ye Wei think of her as more than a friend; he could not help but overthink everything about her in his mind, ‘I will wait here...’

“Kill him!”

“Those are mine! Drop it or I will end you!”

During the next two hours, yells and screams echoed in the hall as the brawls continued until more and more fighters fell. The floor was now covered with bodies and blood as the noise eventually died down.

After the chaos faded, the seven low-grade Mystic Arms found their new, exhausted owners. With Luo Mu Xue gone and Lin Zi Yan, Jin Yan, and Mo Ya deeper in the labyrinth, Lu Chao, Hong Xun, and Xue Yao were the strongest left in the hall; therefore, they got the most treasure of all the survivors.

The group led by Zhao Hou also got a nice cut of the treasure.

Now that the hall had quieted down, the survivors finally had the time to look around. They started to think back and realized how brutal and barbaric they have been. So much so that some of them were actually scared of themselves as they didn't know such a bloodthirsty side of themselves existed.

A lot of cultivators with great potential died that day. Most of the survivors were at least five-star Warriors or above, but it wasn't only the survivors' capabilities that kept them alive. In the dog eat dog world luck was more important than strength.

Clarity hit some of the survivors, and after experiencing the bloodbath

first hand a lot of them were mentally traumatized. They chose to leave the labyrinth just for some peace and quiet. When all of the fighting was completely over there was only around one thousand people left in the hall.

Ye Wei watched all the skirmishes at the edge of the hall. He did not enjoy seeing the bloodshed at all, but he was calm as he witnessed everything. ‘I have to stay here. I am not going to leave this labyrinth until I get my hands on some Welkin Leaves, or at least, I will wait here until Zi Yan returns safely!’

The silence was brief as the people who stayed behind prepared for more bloodshed. They wanted more treasures therefore they started talking about the paths at the front of the hall.

They were under the impression that the path to the right would lead them to more treasures because that was the one Lin Zi Yan, Mo Ya, and Jin Yan choose. People started gathering around the entrance of the rightmost path led by Luo, Hong, and Xue.

The three unofficial leaders slowly walked towards the semi-transparent barrier that the three earlier easily went through.

Hong Xun made the first move. He channeled his Qi causing his skin to turn bronze. His short hair stood up akin to a porcupine with steel spikes. He then signaled for Luo Chao and Xue Yao to take a step back. They had an unspoken agreement that Hong Xun should go first as he was the strongest of the three at the eight-star Warrior level while the others were only at the seven-star level.

He stomped the ground and with his foot as the center a spherical, invisible forcefield spread outwards. Hong Xun threw his arm in the air and started drawing runes with his fingers. The runes then formed a golden Qi bell around his fist as he threw a punch towards the barrier mercilessly.

The presence of Hong Xun's punch drew everyone's attention, and even Ye Wei could feel the Qi disturbance from the edge of the hall. Everyone watched Hong Xun wondering what kind of treasure they would find behind the barrier.

His fist connected onto the barrier and with a loud rumble, the barrier started oscillating and eventually it forced Hong Xun's strike backwards.

Hong Xun's face was ashen as he was forced to take three steps back before he could stand steadily. Each of the steps left a shoe print on the solid ground.

He then coughed, and a line of blood appeared in the corner of his mouth. He stared at the barrier with shock and confusion, 'Am I that much weaker than those three? They entered effortlessly...' He was not the only one discouraged. Everyone who saw the failed attempt was depressed as well. They were afraid that if the strongest couldn't get through, none of them would be able to, and that all the treasure behind the barrier would never be recovered.

After a few deep breaths, Hong Xun's eyes turned to the path on the left, and he quietly walked towards it seeing that they didn't really have a chance to get through the rightmost barrier. Luo Chao and Xue Yao both sighed and followed in his footsteps. 'I guess we will also have to settle for this path...'

‘This guy was not able to get through with that much power behind his punch? I guess Zi Yan will be fine then as it literally took her less than a second to get in. How strong must she be to accomplish that?’ Ye Wei thought as he walked out of his hiding place. He could see everyone were more or less calm now, so he felt safe enough to get closer. He wanted a closer look at the entrances so he could feel the disturbance of Qi from each direction.

The path on the left was a tunnel that was not blocked by anything. There was no barriers or doors, Lu, Hong, and Xue walked in with the rest of the survivors following them. ‘I will just go in and take a look. I might be able to find some Welkin Leaves myself.’ Not willing to go to the rightmost path alone nor wanted to draw any attention onto himself, Ye Wei followed the crowd onto the left path without attempting to break the barrier.

This tunnel looked similar to the ones that led everyone into the hall, but this tunnel was longer, and there were no barriers or anything on the sides; it was just an ordinary tunnel.

After a while, they reached the end of the tunnel. The people in front of the group could see a wide, open area covered with small sharp rocks. They seemed sharp enough to cut a person’s feet if he or she were not careful.

In the middle of the rocks stood one thousand life-like stone effigies. They all had a humanoid shape. Most of them were brown stones and around forty of them were silver-white. Five effigies were larger than the rest, and each of them stood three meters tall and shone with a golden hue.

The effigies were all a bit different, most of them even had weapons in their hands. Some had swords, some had spears, and some of them had shields.

Nobody dared to step into the field, not even Luo, Hong, and Xue. Everyone just stood at the end of the tunnel peeking.

Hong Xun grabbed a five-star Warrior who stood next to him and said: "Why don't you go in and take a look?" As he threw the Warrior into the field out of the blue.

The Warrior was surprised, but he did not lose balance. He landed steadily on his feet clearly not pleased with how he was treated, so he started swearing at Hong Xun quietly. Pressured by Hong Xun and others, he had no choice but to investigate the field.

He unwillingly walked around the whole field carefully and nothing happened. Now relieved, he waved at the crowd and signaled that it was safe. People then started running into the field and inspecting the statues hoping to find hidden treasures somewhere.

'I have a bad feeling about this...' An image of a mountain flashed inside Ye Wei's mind, and he started to panic while everyone else's guards were still down. He felt like he was being watched by something, something alive, something bloodthirsty, something that wanted him dead. He became cautious and started restlessly looking around himself, but nothing was wrong. Everyone was just as they were before, some looking for treasures, some of them were just appreciating how lively the effigies looked.

Just as Ye Wei thought he was having an unreasonable panic attack, a barrier appeared at the tunnel's exit, blocking the way out.

“Careful!” Ye Wei shouted to alert everyone and reached inside his bag. He held one of the Mystic scrolls tight. The crowd then turned to see the tunnel was sealed by a barrier that looked like the one Lin Zi Yan, Mo Ya, and Jin Yan opened earlier back in the hall.

“Who did this?”

“I told you not to touch anything!”

“What? How are we going to get out now?” The crowd started panicking when they heard a rumbling sound.

The brown effigies started moving and opening their stone eyes. Beams of red light shot out of their eyes brightening the dim field. They started lifting their arms and waving them around. The effigies looked massive and clumsy, but they were unexpectedly fast, and their stone fists flew all over the place. The field suddenly filled with wind from the effigies' ferocious strikes.

“Dodge them!”

“Behind you!”

People with better reflex were doing just fine dodging these attacks, but

for the ones who were frozen in place with fear and the ones who were injured in the brawl earlier, the red lights from the effigies' eyes and the heavy impact of stone fists became their last memory.

The seven-star Warriors had it easy as their primal feather wings helped them effortlessly maneuvering between the fists. But it was a struggle to survive for the rest of the crowd.

Fear spread on the field. The effigies did not feel nor did they care, they were programmed to kill and they would not stop.

Chapter 71 – Impasse

Ye Wei stood on the edge of the field close to the now sealed exit, and the two effigies next to him raised their arms simultaneously throwing their fists towards him.

Luckily he wasn't unprepared. He was already in the air before the fists came close to him. He was able to dodge one of them but the second one connected in a flash despite his efforts.

“Ah!” Ye Wei’s left hand was holding the scroll but he didn’t feel the need to tear it. He clenched his right fist and hardened his muscles. His skin glowed with a green tint as he channeled his Qi.

Although Ye Wei was still a four-star Student, his strength and the amount of will-force and Qi he had was what you would find in a six-star Student. The cosmic energy, Myst-level Falling Star cultivation method, and all the pills were the reason he was becoming so exceptional.

‘Let’s try this!’ He thought as he threw his fist towards the brown stone fist coming his way. His strength was no match to the effigy’s which caused his whole arm to become numb from the impact, but he was able to use the recoil to push himself away and dodge the rest of the non-stop assault.

Ye Wei was drenched in sweat just from this brief physical exchange.

‘It’s too dangerous; if I was any slower I would be meat paste by now... I didn’t even have time to tear the scroll!’ He felt lucky that he got away,

now that he was a safe distance from these two effigies. He knew how fast they were, and now that he had an idea of what to expect, he started to plan how to deal with them.

‘They are not that strong. Their strength is comparable to a seven-star Student at most. Furthermore, their attacks are unbelievably fast but their movement in general is slow. It must be due to their weight.’ Ye Wei analyzed the effigies’ every move as he danced around dodging them.

Many others started fighting the effigies close to them once they realized they looked scarier than they fought. Bolts of fire, ice and Qi weapons flew all over the field. Seeing how weak the effigies actually were, some of the Warriors who ran in fear started to become themselves again; they stopped fleeing and fought instead.

The effigies were easily stopped and knocked back by the Warriors’ stances.

“They are not that powerful!”

“God, I was so scared!”

The crowd started to calm down as they gain control of the situation.

They were weak in general and the strength of the brown effigies varied from that of a three-star Student to a ten-star Student. What made their attacks lethal was the weight behind them.

As the crowd got used to the effigies’ attack patterns, they became more

relaxed, and saw the situation as an opportunity to train themselves. Everyone started attacking the brown stone beings instead of solely defending themselves a minute ago.

Not only did they started attacking the effigies, some of the Warriors actually succeeded in smashing them into pieces. Song Gui, driven by rage was one of the first Warriors to shatter an effigy with his bare hands.

“That is for my friend you killed!” Filled with adrenaline and satisfaction of avenging his fallen comrade, he spat on the pile of rubble and shouted angrily. But he wasn’t done, he wanted to break as many of these damned effigies as possible to ease his pain.

Song Gui turned around to fight another effigy that was armed with a stone sword in each of its hands. As he set his eyes on the next target, a scarlet crystal broke out of the rubble pile and flew towards him like a speeding arrow.

Song Gui could hear a screeching sound and felt an approaching force from behind. The crystal flew too fast for him to react. “Ouch! What was that?!” Shocked by the pain in his spine, he screamed.

Just as the scarlet crystal landed on his spine, it shattered and released a thick cloud of bloodmist.

The bloodmist stuck onto Song Gui’s back and kept growing until eventually it covered his whole body. The bloodmist was sticky and it quickly sunk into his body through the pores on his skin. People stopped attacking the effigies when they saw the engulfing mist appearing from

the remains. Once again they didn't do more than defend themselves as they were afraid to break any more effigies until they found out what effect the mist had on Song Gui.

“Kill! Kill! Kill!” He mumbled.

When all of the bloodmist was absorbed into Song Gui's body, he completely lost his consciousness and was overcome by bloodlust. His eyes became bloodshot and the veins all over his body bulged. He looked more like a wild beast than a person.

With their primal feather wings, Hong Xun, Luo Chao, and Xue Yao launched themselves into the air and observed Song Gui's transformation from what they thought to be a safe distance.

“What do you two think?” Hong Xun's thick black eyebrows furrowed as he witnessed the gruesome transformation of the kind-hearted Warrior. “From what I can tell, the scarlet crystal that made him a monster might be the mythical Blood Devourer crystal...”

“What is that?” Xue Yao asked. Neither her nor Luo Chao could remember that name.

“Blood Devourers are a type of primal stone. The Qi stored within them is purer and thicker than normal primal stones, and its quenching property is superior to most of the pills available nowadays.”

“But there is a drawback. The primal energy from these stones is too strong. It will make the user aggressive and the weak-minded will be

consumed by the bloodlust... That's where the crystal's name came from."

The way Song Gui was screaming and twitching sent shivers down Xue Yao's spine. "Can we help him?"

"I don't know if there is a way to help him, it's all up to his will now if he can survive this. But that's not the point I'm trying to make! Effigies and Blood Devourer crystals don't they ring any bells? You guys never heard the stories when you were kids?"

It suddenly all came together for Luo Chao and Xue Yao, "Do you mean this labyrinth is related to the Glacial Emperor?!" Luo Chao widened his eyes and exclaimed.

"Are these effigies the 'Immortal Puppets'?!" Xue Yao started to recall the details of the legend. She realized these were the stone guardians made by the Glacial Emperor to guard his tomb.

"That's what the duo from Ning City are here for? To explore the Glacial Emperor's tomb?"

"If the legends are true, the brown ones are not what we should be worried about." Hong Xun continued, "The silver puppets are far more dangerous, but we should be able to handle them if we all work together. They should be as strong as five-star Warriors, but the gold ones... I don't know how we can deal with them if they come."

When they figured out what this labyrinth was, they temporarily put their differences aside so they could travel deeper into the labyrinth. The

Glacial Emperor's treasure was unmeasurable.

“Get away from him!”

“He’s on his own now, we can’t do anything about it!” Hong Xun warned the crowd from above as some of Song Gui’s friends were trying to get close and calm him down.

Not sure how they should deal with the stone puppets, everyone went back to dodging and defending themselves. It was not hard for anyone to dodge at the start, but as more and more of the brown puppets became active, weaker cultivators found themselves surrounded by more than one puppet as fatigue overtook them.

Ye Wei was now surrounded by three brown puppets. It was getting more and more dangerous and keeping a safe distance from them was starting to become a struggle.

He heard a rumbling sound behind him and two more puppets behind him activated as he quickly ran through the gap between them. He now found himself standing in front of Song Gui. He was in dire straits now as he was blocked from all directions with nowhere to escape, and on top of that he was completely alone.

Chapter 72 – Green veil

There was no way out. Every path of escape was blocked off by the stone puppets and Song Gui.

“I guess there is no other way...” Ye Wei was not pleased. Although he was given five scrolls in total, each of them were worth way more than he was comfortable spending. Using the scroll would not secure Welkin Leaves for his cousin, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

With attacks approaching from every direction, he didn’t have a choice. Therefore, he tore the green scroll. There was no way he could last long if he used a defensive scroll. Being able to take a few more hits would not have put him in a better situation.

As the offensive Myst stance was released, the scroll that was worth more than one hundred thousand silver turned into just a useless scrap of silk.

“So this is what it feels like to be powerful?” Ye Wei felt refreshed to have complete control over so much energy. He was astonished and slowly started to understand why people would pay so much for these scrolls so much that it hurt his heart.

The runes written in demon blood came alive and floated in the air. They became a rune sequence and started to intertwine assembling into a ring of flame that eventually settled on the ground. The ring of fire brightened and encircled Ye Wei. Some of the people who were close to him could see the bright red light leaking from between the puppets.

Although not his own power, Ye Wei was in full control of the Singeing Ground stance, and it only took him a gaze to guide the flame towards the brown puppets. The flame created a mirage as it approached the puppets in a spinning motion as their fists closed in on Yei Wei. With five loud rumbling noises, the force shattered them into rubble, and the heat energy set them aflame.

However, the flame did not stop growing. It followed Ye Wei's point of vision to two hundred other brown puppets reducing them to rubble.

“How can this be? Who's Myst stance is that?” The crowd was shocked by the ferocious attack and their eyes followed the trail of fire to Ye Wei's location.

“Did he just use a medium-grade scroll?”

While the crowd was still surprised and stunned by the powerful stance, they notice a loud rumbling noise. As the flame died down the silver and golden puppets opened their eyes, and beams of red light shone brightly from their eyes.

“Oh no!”

With a speed far superior to the brown puppets, the silver and golden ones immediately rushed towards the cultivators like a pack of rampaging bulls. “I think the Qi disturbance from the kid's Myst stance just woke them up...” Hong Xun's face turn pale as the three strongest cultivators still had not worked out an answer for these stronger puppets.

The puppets' fists fell from high up in the air, akin to a rain of meteors. Although the cultivators have been dodging and dancing through the brown puppets' attacks, the silver and golden ones' awakening was unexpected. They didn't anticipate the stronger puppets' swiftness to be so different than the brown ones.

In a panic, more than fifty Warriors lost their lives. Some to the crushing fists while others were stomped to death either by horrified comrades or the puppets.

Hong, Luo, and Xue knew that if the panic persisted then all of the cultivators would fall sooner or later, and that would be the end of their expedition. Although they didn't have full knowledge about what the puppets could do, they couldn't wait any longer.

“This is it. It’s now or never...” Hong Xun took the initiative and glided down. “Everybody listen! Be calm and stick together! Watch each other’s backs if you want to live!”

In the end, the cultivators on the field were Warriors with moderate experience, so they calmed down quickly and started defending themselves methodically in small groups after Hong, Luo, and Xue stepped up and led the retaliation.

While the others were grouping up, Ye Wei was not so lucky. He was in the corner on his own with Song Gui as people were distracted by the stronger puppets and therefore forgot about him.

Too distracted by the new threat, nobody noticed that Ye Wei was shot

by all the Blood Devourer crystals from the puppets he shattered. Ye Wei was soon surrounded by a layer of thick bloodmist. The vapor wrapped tighter and tighter and within seconds, he turned into a red cocoon.

The surge of energy from one crystal was enough to make Song Gui, a Warrior, lose his mind. Now Ye Wei was in the same situation, but instead of being struck by one crystal, Ye Wei was struck by two hundred and thirty-eight of them.

Inside the cocoon, Ye Wei's body started heating up. The pores on his skin expanded and made it easier for the concentrated bloodmist to sink in. It wasn't long before the aggressive and pure energy was deep under his skin, inside his muscles, organs, and bones.

The space in a four-star Student's dantian and Sentient was very limited, and even a condensed prime Warrior couldn't fully absorb the amount of energy currently rushing into Ye Wei's body. Ye Wei's body was enlarging, and if the cocoon didn't constrict it, it could have exploded already.

Rage and violent intent brought by the crystals' energy was taking over Ye Wei's consciousness. His memories of his father, mother, the Ye Patriarch, cousin Zhong, and Lin Zin Yan were flashing before him; then his cognition started to fade together with his conscience.

Although in this state, Ye Wei was aware of what he would become if he just gave up his sanity, so he bit lips in desperation. In the hope that doing so would stop himself from losing his mind; however, it was not very effective.

Just as he was about to be overcome by rage, the image of the Mystic Mountain appeared in his sentient. It then started to absorb the energy of the crystals. Not only did the Mystic Mountain absorb the energy, but it also purified the surge of evil red energy into soothing yet intense primal energy.

The rage he felt disappeared, and Ye Wei's Sentient and dantian started to grow under the nourishment. Their sizes were now similar to cultivators at the Warrior rank. His cultivation would increase rapidly if he could get out of the cocoon and take the time to train. This near-death experience would actually compensate for how slow his Sentient usually absorbed primal energy from the surroundings.

Although the energy was purified, the sheer amount of it was still a problem. Ye Wei's body was not processing it quick enough, his skin was starting to crack, and his bones were grinding against each other.

In this critical moment, the iron talisman in Ye Wei's interspatial bag started vibrating. It started moving on of its own will and appeared outside of the bag. The talisman then broke through the cocoon and started spinning on top of Ye Wei's head. The eighty-one grooves on the talisman started shining as it started spinning so quickly that the rust on it was thrown off.

A black texture started to seep out of the grooves and expanded like a dark vortex. As it continually sped up, the vortex started to create a strong suction that extracted and then consumed the primal energy surging inside Ye Wei's body.

This caused the cocoon to quickly shrink and Ye Wei's body to return to its normal size. The talisman worked a miracle, it only consumed the

excessive energy, and the remaining energy started repairing his cracked skin and fractured bones.

Ye Wei could not believe the iron talisman would be so useful even he did not know what it was for. After a few cracking sound were heard more and more green webs started appearing under his skin.

Ten green webs under Ye Wei's skin overlapped and formed a green screen which caused his body to glow mildly. He could tell his muscles were now as hard as solid wood and his bones were as strong as metal which signified a breakthrough.

Ye Wei was now a five-star Student, but his dantian and Sentient were stronger than what an ordinary six-star Student possessed, and his body did not stop storing the energy.

The green screen under his skin grew thicker as the purified energy circulated throughout his body. The rest of the purified energy saturated his meridian widening them. After absorbing even more of the purified energy, he became a six-star Student!

Chapter 73 – Golden Puppets

For any Students, five-star and seven-star breakthroughs are the most challenging. Whereas the breakthrough to the six-star level is much simpler. When one's Qi reserve reaches a certain level their meridians will expand and widen. This is the definition of a six-star Student.

Now though neither of those are a big problem for Ye Wei. He could not imagine that the iron talisman would help his cultivation, especially not this significantly.

Ye Wei now possessed the body strength of a seven-star Student, and he could probably take on any seven-star Student in a fight as they usually don't know any powerful stances.

‘Just one more breakthrough then I can try learning mystic stances!’ Ye Wei was ecstatic. Any stance, even just a low-level Spirit stance is more powerful than an ordinary physical attack. As the saying goes, ‘You’re not a cultivator until you’ve mastered your first mystic stance.’

After absorbing the rush of energy that was inside Ye Wei’s body, the iron talisman stop spinning. It was now just floated quietly in front of him and twelve out of the eighty-one grooves on it lit up with a silver glow.

“Stop its attack!”

“If we don’t work together we will all die!”

As the energy within Ye Wei stabilized, his head stopped humming. He could hear the shouting and rumbling through the thick red cocoon. Eager to try out his strength, he threw a punch and broke the cocoon open effortlessly.

He walked out gracefully and retrieved the talisman floating in front of him. He could feel that the talisman was filled with primal energy. Realizing it saved his life by neutralizing the Blood Devourer crystals' energy and helped him breakthrough, he started to wonder and narrowed his eyes. 'What are you? I am pretty sure you're not a Mystic Arm...'

Ye Wei then looked up to evaluate the situation. All he could see was brown rubble on the ground and fallen fighters. There were only about five hundred people left standing from the thousand who entered.

There were a few hundred puppets that were shattered at this point, and half of them were destroyed by Hong Xun, Lu Chao, and Xue Yao.

With broken puppets came rage crazed fighters. The crowd didn't show any mercy to them after seeing Song Gui lose his mind and realizing they were not able to save the fighters who were affected by the crystals. In the end it was their lives at stake so they didn't try to help. With the sacrifice of the fallen, all the silver puppets were finally shattered.

'These golden puppets are on a different level!' As Ye Wei was shaking the flakes of the bloodmist cocoon off his clothes, Lu, Hong, and Xue lead everyone else to attack the golden puppets. Despise the organised attack the puppets showed no sign of slowing down, their attacks were as strong

as when they were just activated.

From what Hong Xun could see four of the golden puppets were as strong as a seven-star Warrior while the biggest and strongest one had the strength of an eight-star Warrior. Even Hong Xun, strong as he was, couldn't deal with it alone. Lu, Xue and him were handling the biggest one while they commanded the rest what they could.

The survivors organised themselves into four groups of around one hundred by Hong Xun's order. Each group kept one golden puppet under control. They couldn't really harm the puppets, but handling them with a big group was the only way to survive. They were just waiting for the three temporary leaders to finish the strongest puppet so they could combine their forces and deal with the rest.

“Let's not play the long game; we can't just tire it out. The crystals inside them can keep them running for days. We have to give it our all and finish them. Our bodies will never outlast theirs.” Hong Xun said as he strengthened his body with the Golden Bell stance. His body was covered by a layer of golden Qi and his empowered fist knocked the strongest puppet off balance.

“Nice!” Lu Chao and Xue Yao could also feel that the prolonged fight has taken its toll on their bodies. They all came to the same conclusion, that they would not have any will-force or Qi left if the fight lasted much longer.

Lu Chao grunted and quickly drew a rune sequence. It wrapped around his legs forming his strongest stance, Tempest Kick. Behind the bright green light of the runes, a tornado was brewing. Then he unleashed his spinning kick mercilessly towards the golden puppet.

Meanwhile Xue Yao was also not holding back. She finished drawing the last rune of her sequence and activated the Lotus Sword Dance. A green spectral lotus appeared and the six petals detached themselves from the flower transforming into six swords that flew towards the puppet at different angles.

“Golden Drill!” Hong Xun shouted then drew some runes around his body. The runes started spinning around him and the bell shaped Qi armor around him also started rotating and vibrating. With a humming sound the golden bell tore through air and flew directly towards their common enemy.

Although Hong Xun was the last person to attack, he was the strongest among the three. His stance was not only the most powerful, it was also the quickest therefore the Golden Drill was the first stance to hit the puppet.

The Golden Drill shattered upon connecting with the puppet. The sharp debris of the drill carried on attacking the puppet chipping off little golden pieces of stone. Hundred of cracks and cuts were forming on the puppet but it felt no pain, nor was it worn down any. It continued waving its fists around and charging towards Hong Xun.

Seeing that Hong Zun’s stance left cracks on the puppet, Lu and Xue redirected their stances toward the weaker inche deep cracks on the puppet’s surface.

The green tornado and the six spectral swords landed on the puppet’s left shoulder and right arm respectively. While the impact of Lu Chao’s

kick not only expanded the cracks rapidly, but with the help of Xue Yao's swords they successfully stopped the puppet's attacks and also broke its arms off.

Hong Xun could not relax just yet, "Don't let your guards down!" Although it's armless, the puppet was still charging towards him and approaching with a spinning kick.

Now that the puppet's attacks slowed down Hong, Lu, and Xue took the chance to take a deep breath and regained a bit of energy. Energy they put towards their final strike.

"Hold on guys! The strongest puppet is about to go down, we just have to keep these weaker ones under control for a bit longer!" Encouraged by the sight of the armless puppet, the morale surged.

Ye Wei couldn't really contribute at this point. He was just observing from the side and thinking about Ye Zhong. 'Compared to Green Moon City these youngsters from Frozen Sun City are very strong. I think cousin Zhong is talented enough, with my help he should be able to catch up with Hong Xun maybe even Luo Wu Xue!'

'I need to go deeper into this labyrinth to find some Welkin Leaves! But we won't be able to search for the path ahead until we neutralize these statues!' With that in mind, he jumped into one of the groups and tried to make himself useful. He was kind of glad that everything seemed to be under control, or else he might have to use yet another scroll to help defeat these puppets.

After a brief moment of rest, Lu, Xue, and Hong used their best stances

again and this time they targeted the puppet's legs, which turned into rubble as the stances connected. The trio was exhausted, but their effort paid off. The puppet was now no longer a threat.

Having used high-level Spirit stance multiple times in such quick succession, Lu Chao and Xue Yao pretty much drained their will-force and QI. Their faces were pale and their breathing was a bit heavy.

It was not much better for Hong Xun, although he was an eight-star Warrior, he was mentally and physically worn out as he had to pay attention to the other four puppets and tell the groups of cultivators how to deal with the stone fists. He did this all while leading Lu and Xue to defeat the strongest puppet.

“Guys! Just hold on for a couple more minutes!” Hong Xun shouted as he took a pill out of his bag. He used the pill then sat down to regain some Qi and body strength.

Lu Chao and Xue Yao too took their time to recuperate hoping there would not be more casualties before they could eradicate the rest of the puppets.

Chapter 74 – Last Resort

“Fight safe! We won’t get any help before they’ve recovered!” One of the stronger Warriors stepped up and tried to motivate the exhausted groups, but his effort was pretty redundant as everyone could almost taste victory.

As for Ye Wei, his hand was never further than an inch away from his interspatial bag. If anything happened, the scrolls would be the thing he would rely on while the three who are capable of neutralizing the puppets were still recovering from exhaustion.

Time passed slowly while the groups struggled to defend themselves against the puppets. But before long, Hong Xun opened his eye and stood up with an unstoppable momentum, his face was no longer pale. Lu Chao and Xue Yao also stood up shortly after Hong Xun did.

Interpreting the trio’s recovery as the end of the battle, the groups were starting to feel relieved.

Ye Wei, took his hand away from his interspatial bag as Hong Xun approached. ‘If they can beat the fastest, strongest, and biggest one of them the rest should not be a problem! ’

However just as Lu Chao was channeling his Qi, all of the golden puppets, including the limbless one on the ground opened their mouths and started roaring.

All five puppets widened their eyes and casted beams of red light into

the air. They met in the air and the runes climbed up the small pillars of red light towards the center of the field. The runes on their bodies started moving and glowing red forming the frame of an irregular five sided pyramid.

The thousands of runes filling the space akin swarms of butterflies. Suddenly, a loud rumbling sound echoed throughout the space as the runes linked together. An intense wave of energy shortly followed leaving the crowd in shock.

Their relaxed faces turned ashen as they shivered, even Hong, Lu, and Xue were afraid, 'This is definitely not good...' They thought. The pressure they felt exceeded what they experienced when Jin Yan and Mo Ya channeled their Myst stances to break the gigantic rune barrier.

'What is going on here?' Ye Wei could feel the energy from each of the puppets merging with one another. There was a synergistic reaction between the five sets of runes. 'Is there a way to stop this? I don't think this will end well for anyone if the energy keeps growing...'

As the crowd were shaking in fear, the golden puppets suddenly shattered and from the rubble five large Blood Devourer crystals rose.

They quickly flew up, and each of them soaked up the runes on a red rune pillar to form five rune clusters. Then the ground started shaking and nobody could stand straight. People either fell or were on their hands and knees. As the earthquake intensified, the rubble on the field started rattling and levitating.

The field was spacious, and there were no less than a hundred

thousand pieces of sharp rubble on the field. This moment all of them flew into the air. It looked like a violent sandstorm from a distance. The rubble was drawn towards the rune clusters. Two of them started taking the shape of arms and two others formed legs, while the last cluster was forming a head shape.

After the limbs and head took shape, the rubble starting filling the space between the stone limbs. By the time this thirty meters tall stone puppet came together everyone were shaking; they were overwhelmed by fear.

Not only did the larger structure appeared sturdier than its previous smaller incarnations, it was clear to everyone that none of the cultivators present possesses power to defeat this stone giant and their fear turned into despair.

Jin Yan and Mo Ya were peak level ten-star Warriors which means they are about ten times stronger than a ten-star who just broke through and the stone giant was the former kind of existence.

“Someone here has to have a medium-grade scroll right!?” Inspiration struck Hong Xun as he remembered a boy used a Mystic Scroll to destroyed more than two hundred puppets in less than ten seconds. “Where is what’s his face? Did he survive? Does he have any more scrolls!?” Hong Xun was panicked. He shouted as he ran through the crowd looking for Ye Wei.

“Guys find that kid!” Hong Xun was not the only person who saw Ye Wei dealing with the puppets, and it wasn’t long until one of them spotted Ye Wei.

“Here he is!” One of the Warriors signaled the others when he identified Ye Wei, and everyone started running towards where he was.

“Let’s go to him!”

“Guys he’s there!”

Shouting continued as fear was in the air and the levitating stone giant slowly descended. With a loud rumble it landed and, although the landing was gentle, the stone giant’s feet left two deep potholes due to its weight. Its red beams of light shone from its eyes were now pointed in the cultivators’ direction.

“Run!”

After a deafening roar, the stone giant started chasing after the crowd. Each step it took shook the ground, and the red projection on the crowds’ back intensified as the stone giant got closer.

It’s not very often one sees hundreds of cultivators running for their lives. Although Ye Wei was the only person who could see this scene from the side, he was not amused by it, but rather worried about letting everyone down.

‘Please tell us you have another scroll!’ Was everyone’s thought at that moment but none of them had the time to ask Ye Wei if he had another one as they were too busy running for their lives.

There was no other way. No one present could fight this stone giant, Ye Wei was now their last hope; their last resort.

Lots of the people who were at the field including Hong, Lu, and Xue actually considered escaping when Jin Yan and Mo Ya showed up because of the threat they felt, but this stone puppet startled them on a completely different level. If worse came to worst, there would be no chance to negotiate or beg for mercy and there was nowhere left to run.

The stone giant showed no signs of stopping. It was striking its chest creating a drumming sound while chasing the crowd. While everyone was running away from it, Ye Wei had his head down and slowly walked towards what the others feared.

‘I can’t promise anything... But I guess this is our only chance.’ Ye Wei’s shaking hand tightly grasped onto one of the offensive Mystic Scrolls.

The closer the stone giant got, the harder it was for him to breathe. While the giant’s pace remained the same, Ye Wei’s heart was beating faster and faster.

Thirty meters...

Twenty meters...

Ten meters...

Ye Wei meant to tear the scroll way sooner but it took time for him to gather his strength as he was in shock. He finally managed to tear it

when the giant was only one step away from crushing him.

The moment the scroll was torn, the demon blood runes flew out and the sequence rapidly transformed into a ten meter long hammer. A weapon that belonged to an old god.

Although the gigantic phantom hammer gave off an intense Qi disturbance, due to the runic link, Ye Wei could move it around fluidly as if it was a weightless extension of his arm.

Without a moment's hesitation, Ye Wei loosened his shoulders and took a heavy step forward. After quickly establishing a steady point of balance he grunted then swung the phantom hammer with lightning-like speed towards the approaching stone giant.

“He really has one! It’s a Myst stance!” Hong Xun exclaimed. ‘It was apparent that this kid was just a Student so what kind of powerful family would invest so much resources in a weakling like him? I bet even Jin Yan had to earn his scrolls by contributing to his family, and he had one of the most prestigious last names in Ning City!’

At first the crowd was surprised and somewhat jealous of how Ye Wei was carrying more than two hundred thousand worth of scrolls with him. But after the initial amusement, they were just rooting for him. They were hoping that this ‘rich kid’ could help them avoid their impending doom.

Chapter 75 – Functions

Medium-grade mystic scrolls are anything but common, and it was the stances within that made them known as a symbol of power. This reputation was the reason why everyone was almost smiling when they saw the Myst stance summoned from Ye Wei's scroll. They were more than certain that the phantom hammer would turn the stone giant back into rubble.

However, Hong, Lu, and Xue were a bit more realistic. There was an optimistic shine in their eyes but also a frown. All three of them knew how powerful the puppet was, and an incomplete Myst stance might not be enough to take down the combined power of six large Blood Devourer crystals.

The three temporary leaders were doubtful, but they kept their cool and were ready to strike the giant together with Ye Wei. Not that they were sure their joined attack would be sufficient, but they would have to try because if they didn't then nobody would get out of this field alive.

Ye Wei was under immense pressure as he was the focus of everyone's eyes, but he didn't let the stress get to him. He was in his own world and determined to give it his all.

It was hard to miss such a large target, and a deafening bang sounded when the hammer landed right on the puppet's shoulder. The collision created a violent spray of sparks and a rippling pressure wave that shook the ground.

The giant was forced to take a step back, and that was the moment when Ye Wei seized the opportunity to aim the hammer at its head.

Contrary to its clumsy appearance, the giant's reflexes were actually phenomenal. It quickly crossed its arms over its head to block Ye Wei's strike.

Seeing that the giant was defending itself efficiently against the Myst stance, the crowd started to show worrying expressions as they watched the mighty hammer that was held in the air.

A cracking sound caught the attention of the crowd. It was not from the point of impact but the sound of the ground breaking underneath the giant as his feet sank about a meter into the surface.

Ye Wei's face was completely red. He grunted and put all his strength behind the third strike that landed on the giant's head this time. Its legs completely sunk in the ground to its knees.

After immobilizing the giant, Ye Wei could feel that the phantom hammer was going to disappear soon as its energy was quickly running out. Thus, he took one last chance to hammer the puppet.

This time, the hammer landed heavily on the puppet's shoulder. After the final hammer strike, the giant's waist was submerged below solid ground. Its right shoulder and arm were cracked and chipped from the repeated strikes. As the red light in the giant's eyes was dimming the phantom hammer started to fade.

“Yes!”

“He did it!”

The crowd cheered as the stone giant powered down. Hong, Lu, and Xue were relieved by the result, and their lips curled into relaxing smiles.

Ye Wei too was relaxed, and there was a childish smile on his face. Although he had to use two very valuable medium-grade scrolls, he was satisfied that he managed to save hundreds of lives. He was also happy that he would be able to search for a path that led deeper into the labyrinth.

Welcomed by friendly smiles, Ye Wei turned and walked towards the others, but as he took the fifth step, a sharp cracking noise came from behind him. “What?” The unexpected sound sent a shiver down his spine, and he immediately turned around to check on the stone giant.

The crisp cracking sound echoed in the field and was heard by everyone. Suddenly everything went silent as everyone quickly looked towards the source of the sound, it caused their smiles to disappear.

“How... How come...” Hong, Lu, and Xue emotionlessly stared at the stone giant and their faces became ashened.

The giant started moving again as its fists fiercely pounded the ground cracking and breaking the surface.

With every punch, the cracks spread and the ground around the giant

turned into loose rubble in no time. The giant then roared and slammed his palms to the ground one last time, launching its gigantic body into the air.

The red light in its eye relit and this time, they looked like two massive fireballs. The giant's killing intent and presence had intensified considerably.

“But that was a medium-grade mystic scroll! How else can we stop it if a Myst stance failed the job?”

“How can this be?!”

“Does anyone here have other ways to deal with this stone giant?!”

“No! No! I don't want to die!”

The stone giant landed on the ground, and no hopeful faces could be found on the field. Some were crying and while others were screaming as it approached.

“I can't just die here!” Ye Wei bite his lips in a panic. ‘That was all I had, what else can I do?’

Just as Ye Wei was coming to the conclusion that there was nothing at all he could do, the silhouette of his cousin appeared in his mind. ‘It's true I don't have answers at this moment, but cousin Zhong fought till he dropped to save my life and I shall do the same!’ Ye Wei's fighting spirit was relit, and his tired eyes were brightened.

Ye Wei took out his interspatial bag and began searching.

There were Qi stones, herbs, pills, and some rare metals in the bag but all of the items he found in the stone houses with Lin Zi Yan were useless.

The most valuable things in his bag would be the Sliver Moon pills and then the scrolls he was given. Taking the pills won't help in such an urgent situation. There were one offensive and two defensive scrolls remaining, but they had proven to be insufficient...

“No, not this!”

Ye Wei's bloodshot eyes looked hysterical as the stone giant was closing in but after going through his whole interspatial bag, he could not find anything that would help him.

The giant's fist was in front of him now, and he had no time, ‘Screw it!’ Ye Wei grit his teeth, he was ready to take out all three remaining scrolls

“Ouch, that burns!” Just as he pulled the scrolls out, his hand came in contact with something hot.

“It's the iron talisman?!” Ye Wei took the talisman out together with the scrolls. The last time he laid his hands on the talisman it was as cold as ice, but now it left a mild burn mark on his skin. He was confused, but there was no time for him to think about it.

“Watch out!” As Ye Wei was distracted by the burn, the stone fist was only a meter away from him. Everyone gasped as it did not look like he had enough time to dodge.

A second ago he was wondering why the talisman was so hot and the next second all he knew was that an enormous stone fist was in front of him.

At this critical time, he made a split decision to tear the offensive scroll. Hundreds of glittering runes appeared, and the temperature around him dropped. The runes then turned into small icicles, and the icicles merged together forming a sword. It was the low-level Myst stance, Black Icicle Sword.

As Ye Wei was ready to strike the giant with the icicle sword, the talisman in his hand heated up and started vibrating causing it to slip out of his hand. Immediately the talisman flew above the stone giant and created a black vortex.

Having absorbed the energy of over two hundred puppets, twelve of the eighty-one grooves were lit up. Now more and more of those grooves were lighting up as it absorbed energy from the stone giant.

‘The talisman is... absorbing the giant’s power?’

‘It’s draining the giant!’

Ye Wei’s eyes widened, he could hardly believe how slow the giant’s punch had suddenly become due to the talisman. It took no effort for him

to jump to the side and dodge the attack.

Observing the talisman's mysterious abilities, Ye Wei was just as confused as he was happy to stop these puppets.

Chapter 76 – Blood Cocoon

Judging from the stone giant's original power, even if Ye Wei were to tear another medium-grade scroll and activate the Myst stance within, it would not really be effective, but now he saw a chance with the iron talisman's aid.

“Black Ice Sword, cut!”

It was a golden opportunity, and Ye Wei naturally took the chance. He screamed and mercilessly drove the ancient ice-cold sword into the puppet's neck.

Although Ye Wei was the owner of the iron talisman, he didn't really know why or how it could crush the puppet, but everyone who was looking from the behind thought he did. They assumed the talisman was a powerful item given to him by his mysterious family.

While Ye Wei was driving the Black Ice Sword toward the puppet's neck, everyone watched the highly anticipated strike; the hundreds of Warriors and also Ye Wei could not take their eyes off the sword.

How this sword struck would determine everyone's destiny.

“Booom!”

Under the watchful eyes, the chillingly sharp ancient blade cut across the stone giant's neck, its head rolled off from its neck immediately.

“Black Ice Sword, cut it! Cut!” Ye Wei had no other thought in his head; he just wanted to get in as many strikes as he could before the sword disappeared. He used every last bit of strength in his body to repeatedly strike the giant.

The puppet was almost invulnerable, but under the iron talisman’s suppression, it was no different than ordinary stone!

‘How could ordinary stone withstand a Myst stance?’

The sword kept striking down.

Within the frame of a few breathes, Ye Wei took full advantage of the situation and used the Black Ice Sword to attack the puppet multiple times. When the sword finally disappeared, the stone giant was completely demolished; he was turned into countless pieces of gravel.

Just as the monster crumbled, the five Blood Devourer crystals that powered the giant no longer had a host, and they shot towards Ye Wei.

These five crystals were superior to the two hundred and thirty-eight Blood Devourer crystals from before; the Qi and the violent intent were also stronger!

“No!” Ye Wei’s face changed massively. Subconsciously he wanted to dodge the crystals, but their speed was just too fast, in the blink of an eye they had already landed on Ye Wei’s body.

Five crystals violently exploded when they touched Ye Wei's skin and dispersed into a screen of thick blood mist. Just as it was about to wrap around Ye Wei, the iron talisman flew three inches above Ye Wei's head. At this moment, the dense blood mist had already become a three meters tall human shaped blood cocoon.

Everything happened in mere seconds, so quick that nobody could even react.

“What's going on?”

“We have to save him!”

A couple of Warriors realized what happened and hurried to Ye Wei's side. They anxiously looked at the three meters tall human shaped cocoon. Ye Wei has saved their lives, and to beat this stone puppet he used a total of three medium-grade mystic scrolls. This favor was as big as Mt. Tai.

Although they were here at Bloodmist Valley for treasures, Ye Wei had saved them and a lot of people were grateful! That's why, even when the passage that led deeper into the labyrinth had appeared on the ground where the golden puppets were located after the stone giant has shattered, they were still guarding the giant human shaped blood cocoon with faces full of concern.

Hong Xun frowned while looking at the blood cocoon. Aware of how dangerous the Blood Devourer crystals were, he scanned the crowd and asked in a calm tone, “Is there a solution?”

Even one Blood Devourer crystal contained enough energy and rage to strip a Warrior's conscience and drive the victim insane, and now Ye Wei had the energy of five large, superior-grade Blood Devourer crystal consuming him, a mere Student.

Students were not as strong willed as Warriors. As warriors already had the experience of defeating their inner demons at least once and because of this their minds were much stronger.

For cultivators, breaking through star levels meant just a minor breakthroughs, and to achieve those, one only needs to strengthen their Sentient and body, which is relatively easy.

But if one wants to advance to the next rank, from Student to Warrior, for example, one must experience a major breakthrough. During which the cultivator will have to face their inner demons. From Student to Warrior, Warrior to condensed prime Warrior, condensed prime Warrior to returned prime Warrior, during all these stages a cultivator will have to face and conquer his personal fears; otherwise, he will remain a ten-star Student or ten-star Warrior forever. Someone never strong enough to deal with their inner demons.

“He is just a Student, so his will is weaker than Warriors. These Blood Devourer crystals are stronger than the ones that powered the weaker puppets... I’m afraid...”

“So what should we do? Are you saying that we should just watch?” Zhou Hou was so anxious that his forehead was covered in sweat. When he saw that Ye Wei was with Lin Zi Yan, he already had the idea that they had powerful people behind them, but he would have never guessed that they would have given him as many as three medium-grade

scrolls.

“There is no way we can save him!”

Lu Chao gazed upon the blood cocoon that contained Ye Wei then looked at the passage that led deeper into the labyrinth, and a sense of greed flashed through his eyes. But he was also worried. The stone creatures here were very strong and deeper in the labyrinth there was bound to be something even more dangerous lurking. If he were alone, he wouldn't dare enter.

“Now... Now what? Do we just wait?” Lu Chao asked with fake concern. He said trying to convince everyone that he cared about Ye Wei.

“Keep waiting?” There were a lot of people in the crowd who started to look down with uncertainty in their eyes. They had lived through many dangerous moments, and had many near death experiences, and as such they weren't sure if it was worth their time when they could be exploring the labyrinth instead.

“I, Hong Xue, owe him my life! No matter the outcome, I have to know if he lives or dies!” Hong Xun straightened his face and stared at Lu Chao.

“Me too!”

“And me!”

In the end, there were a lot of people who truly appreciated Ye Wei's

effort and were genuinely concerned about his well-being.

“Count me in too!” Zhou Hou was an opportunist, but an honorable man. His life was saved by Ye Wei, and if he were to leave Ye Wei behind for his own personal gain he would be no different to an animal that has no concept of honor. No matter what, he had to know Ye Wei’s fate.

Among these Warriors, many of them knew how to be respectful and honorable; if they were not, their comrades would abandon them without hesitation.

However, some of them, like Lu Chao, wanted to go deeper into the labyrinth, but as nobody was going to take the lead they were too scared to make a move.

Everyone started to sit down and cultivate. Time passed slowly as they waited. After five hours had passed uneventfully, Lu Chao and some of the others started getting restless and annoyed. They could not repress their greed.

“It was not easy getting this far, do we really need to waste our time and wait for one person?” Lu Chao rose up and asked.

“That youngster saved my life, and I will remember his kindness for the rest of my life, but we can’t just sit here and wait. I, Lu Chao, will share half of the treasures I find here in this labyrinth with this boy in the cocoon. This I swear!” Lu Chao sounded convincing. ‘If he lives.’ He finished in his head.

“We have been through many challenges that could have easily cost us our lives to get to where we are now. My family is currently going through a crisis, and I have to get more treasure from this trip to help them through this tough time!” Lu Chao said as he excused himself and headed towards the passage.

“Is it really necessary to wait and see if the boy lives or dies?”

Lu Chao scornfully looked at the blood cocoon. In his eyes, there was no way this Student could overcome the rage intent of five superior-grade Blood Devourer crystals and therefore no point in waiting.

Other Warriors eventually stood up as well, “My mother is very ill! I am an only child, and if I don’t obtain any treasures and sell them to pay for my mother’s treatment, then I won’t be able to face my ancestors!”

“My father is ill!”

“My fiance is waiting for me!”

“My child...”

Followed by Lu Chao’s fake speech, people who cared more about the treasures hidden ahead eventually stood up one by one and gave all sorts of excuses to ease their conscience.

“If you all don’t want to stay, then leave! Nobody is stopping you! Save your stupid excuses for people who care!” Hong Xun said while opening his eyes and staring at Lu Chao and the cowards behind him.

The Warriors who were patiently waiting also opened their eyes and spitefully stared at the ungrateful.

“Ha, ha! Lu Chao, today I finally get to see your true colors!” Xue Yao laughed sarcastically, “To have you known as one of the four strongest youngsters of Frozen Sun City is a disgrace.”

“Pfft! I don’t care what you lot think of me. I have no regrets, and I am definitely not ungrateful!” Lu Chao felt shameful as his greed was exposed; he could feel the spiteful stares as he walked away.

Led by Lu Chao half of the Warriors left to explore the depths of the labyrinth.

“What is happening inside the cocoon...” Hong Xun, Xue Yao, and the cultivators who stayed couldn’t take their eyes off it; they continued to wait patiently. How Ye Wei made it out of the last cocoon gave them hope that he would get out of this one safely too.

Chapter 77 – Seven-Star

Inside the blood cocoon, the iron talisman was flying around Ye Wei's body whilst giving off a red glow. This time, Ye Wei was very much conscious despite the rage of the souls sacrificed to make the crystals that were rushing through his body, as the Mystic Mountain was suppressing the aggressive energy of the crystals inside Ye Wei's Sentient. The rage intent and aggressive energy were once again purified, nourishing and strengthening Ye Wei's Sentient instead of harming it.

Ye Wei opened his eyes thinking, 'There is good and evil within everyone. It's so hard to judge if a person really cares about you unless you see how they deal with a situation like this...' The people outside could not see Ye Wei, but Ye Wei could hear their conversations clearly.

The fact that some of the Warriors left while the others willingly stayed showed Ye Wei what being honorable truly meant.

'My Sentient is almost as strong as a Warrior's now, and now that I have enough pills I think I can try to breakthrough to seven-star level!'

'However this is not the time. My dantian has not fully expanded yet! I should make it as large as I can before I attempt to breakthrough.' Ye Wei clenched his fist as he thought this. Although the Ye family is not considered big, they did teach their kids common sense. Ye Wei was taught a great deal about training since a young age.

'The seven-star Student breakthrough is the most important for a Student; I have to do it properly. Rushing it will do me more harm than

good.' Ye Wei's radiant eyes shone brightly.

'The body will evolve when one becomes a five-star Student, and the green screen of Qi will help improve one's speed, strength, and defense multiple times compared to a four-star Student! And when I become a seven-star Student, my dantian will evolve!'

'Base on the dantian size during the breakthrough, seven-star Student's dantian can potentially hold many times the Qi as a six-star Student can, that's why six-star Students should establish a good foundation and strengthen their dantian as hard as possible!'

'While breaking through to the six-star level, my dantian was widened, when I become a seven-star Student its space will multiply. I need to take advantage of my time now as the more I expand it, the greater the effects will be when I breakthrough.'

'A frightening amount of Qi is needed to expand it, and the better the pills are the larger my dantian will get. It seems that the Qi inside each superior-grade Blood Devourer crystal is purer and stronger than the Qi within a Silver Moon pill, and it's only a tiny bit weaker than cosmic energy. Although the talisman absorbed the majority of the Qi from the Blood Devourer crystals, the remaining energy should be sufficient for my needs!'

'I've never heard of these strange red crystals. I don't think they are something I can buy anywhere. If they were for sale, I imagine they would cost far more than a Silver Moon pill. The feeling I get after refining these crystals is as if I had taken quite a few high-quality pills.'

Ye Wei thought all this as he controlled the energy from the Blood Devourer crystals. He diverted all of it from around his body into his dantian to expand it as much as possible.

The iron talisman had now returned to its original position, three inches above Ye Wei's head, after flying around his body absorbing most of the energy. While Ye Wei was focused on cultivating, the talisman had been replenishing its energy. Now eighty out of the eighty-one grooves on the talisman were shining silver, and the last groove was half filled.

The people who sat around the blood cocoon did not know that Ye Wei was currently cultivating, and five more hours passed without anyone noticing anything odd about the cocoon. After hours of channeling the energy into his dantian, Ye Wei vigorously opened his eyes.

'It's at its limit!' Ye Wei's face showed joy and his eyes were shining. After cultivating for so long, he finally fully expanded his dantian as much as was physically possible.

Ye Wei also knew that once he became a seven-star Student, his will-force would evolve as well. His Sentient should then be as large as a Warrior's, and his dantian would be able to store as much as a nine-star Student could!

When he successfully breaks through and reaches the seven-star level, his body strength wouldn't be necessary for combat. He would be as strong as a nine-star Student due to his Sentient and dantian! His body strength would be the only thing lacking.

Strength is strength but against mystic stances it can only do so much!

‘Now is the time to breakthrough!’ Ye Wei thought excitedly in his heart. He was looking forward to this for a long time now. Once he becomes a seven-star Student, he can verify if he is able to use mystic stances; even if he can’t use them he could still attempt to create and refine stances!

For now, Ye Wei’s Sentient was still red, but so what? If he could use mystic stances, he can easily refine stances with his phenomenal Soul Sensibility. With all the cosmic energy he would acquire he could then easily upgrade his Sentient quickly.

After Ye Wei slowly exhaled and calmed down from his excitement, struggled to move his arm inside the tight cocoon but he managed to take a Silver Moon pill out of his bag and swallowed it, thus started attempting a breakthrough.

The Silver Moon pill melted as it entered Ye Wei’s mouth and the dense Qi within the pill was released immediately. It rushed into his system, and he was overwhelmed by a refreshing feeling as if he had dived into a cool river on a midsummer’s day. His muscles were shaking, and his bones emitted a cracking sound. His organs were vibrating and it felt like every cell of his body was cheering and celebrating. Ye Wei narrowed his eyes and let himself dwell in this comfortable feeling.

‘These Silver Moon pills are definitely better and more valuable than Fiery Sun Quenchers, and their effects are astounding. The Qi within them is so clean, and there are no impurity in the energy at all!’ Feeling the intense, refreshing primal energy in his body, Ye Wei’s lips curled upward forming an excited smile.

‘The transformation has begun!’ Ye Wei thought as he took a deep breath and could feel the changes in his body. He closed his eyes and held his breath as he started to focus on breaking through.

Ye Wei’s cultivation was at the limit of a six-star Student’s. His Sentient and his body strength were strong enough now, and with the help of the Silver Moon pills breaking through was not a difficult task at all.

Bang! Boom! Boom!

As the Silver Moon pill’s effect spread throughout Ye Wei’s body, his strength slowly started to improve. The green energy layer under his skin thickened, and his Sentient too was gradually expanding however his dantian transformed at an even faster speed.

The quiet dantian was filled with dense primal energy, and it was vibrating at a mysterious frequency. With this vibration, Ye Wei’s dantian was expanding at a pace.

In a matter of moment, Ye Wei’s dantian was twice as big as it was before he had been trapped in the cocoon.

To expand one’s dantian takes an alarming amount of primal energy, and in a matter of seconds, Ye Wei had swallowed three whole Silver Moon pills.

Ye Wei’s Sentient was red, so it absorbs Qi at a very slow rate. If it wasn’t supported by pills or external energy, just from normal training Ye

Wei would not be able to gather enough Qi without two to three years' time.

Luckily Ye Wei had enough pills on him. A total of one hundred and eighty-nine Silver Moon pills, and that was way more than enough for his seven-star breakthrough.

Feeling the pills' effect fading, Ye Wei took one Silver Moon pill after another as if they were candy.

Time passed slowly while Ye Wei took pill after pill. Under this enormous influx of Qi, Ye Wei's dantian kept expanding.

Two times, three times, four times, five times!

When Ye Wei's dantian has enlarged five times its original size, his expansion speed started to slow down. Four more hours passed until his dantian was finally seven times as big as its original size, and when his growth stopped he was a seven-star Student!

Seven times!

Ye Wei's dantian expanded seven times its original size. Now his dantian was multiple times larger than an ordinary seven-star Student's it is even comparable to a nine-star Student's dantian.

Before attempting his breakthrough, Ye Wei used the energy from the crystals to expand his dantian to its maximum size. After using them, he had a good foundation to build on which is what let his dantian grow so

much more than an ordinary six-star Student's usually would.

Suffice it to say it's impossible to widen one's dantian to its limit without an unimaginable amount of energy.

“Pff!” Ye Wei who sat in a lotus position in the cocoon, opened his eyes and slowly exhaled. Immediately after he clenched his fist and felt the vast energy in his body. His face showed a happy smile.

‘My cultivation is just a seven-star Student, but when it comes to my Sentient size and my dantian, I am as good as an ordinary nine-star student!’

‘Stances! I can finally try to use mystic stances!’ Ye Wei’s eyes were glittering. He had been waiting for this day for too long, far too long.

‘I still don’t believe that I can’t use mystic stances!’ Ye Wei thought about how he failed Master Yi rune consonant test. About how he scored zero which meant that he could never use stances, and he bit his lips. The happiness in his heart and the excitement from his breakthrough was replaced by nervousness.

‘No matter the result, I will overcome my fate!’ Ye Wei kept biting his lip as his eyes shone with determination. He was ready to try and use a mystic stance.

‘The White Tiger’s Assault is a low-level Myst stance, Triple Plunder Sword is a high-level Spirit stance, and Windrift Steps is also a high-level Spirit stance with my current cultivation I would not have enough

will-force or Qi to use any of these high-level stances. The stance I refined with Zi Yan though, Triple Tidal Palm is a mid-level Spirit stance; I can try that instead.' Ye Wei thought, and started to picture the way Triple Tidal Palm was formed and the rune sequence that was used.

At the seven-star Student level, the will-force in Ye Wei's Sentient and the Qi in his dantian could only support a low-level Spirit stance. There was hope, but Ye Wei was not sure if he could successfully perform the mid-level Spirit stance, Triple Tidal Palm.

'Mid-level Spirit stance, Triple Tidal Palm!' Inside the three meters tall cocoon, Ye Wei stood up and held his breath so he could focus better. He slowly raised his finger as strands of will-force were forming on it. At the same time Qi rushed out of his dantian.

With will-force as a quill and Qi as ink, Ye Wei started drawing mystic runes!

In the air, rune after rune was drawn by Ye Wei stroke after stroke.

"Eh?" While drawing the runes, Ye Wei was startled. He widened his eyes and stared at the runes. They were disappearing before he could even finish drawing them.

'I'm too careless!' Ye Wei slapped his forehead and shook his head while smiling embarrassingly.

Ye Wei had underestimated how difficult it was to perform a mystic stance; understanding how the runes are drawn and where they should

be in the sequence is not enough.

To successfully complete a mystic stance one has to draw the runes quickly and perfectly coordinate their Qi flow. Only when both criteria were met will one see success.

It takes a lot of time to train if one wants to master a stance because determination and will are limited; therefore, no cultivator would be obsessed with how many mystic stances they learned but instead they would spend their time on perfecting the few they knew.

Chapter 78 – Jade Crystal Wall

“It has been fifteen hours since the boy was trapped in the cocoon, I wonder what is happening to him in there...” Everyone looked worryingly at the three meters tall blood cocoon then at the passage that led deeper into the labyrinth. Their eyes showed a bit of resentment and anxiousness.

Luckily Ye Wei’s life signs had not disappeared, and there was still a Qi disturbance coming from the cocoon.

“Guys, you have recovered pretty well. You might as well head down the passageway. I will guard the cocoon, and everyone else can go search for more treasures. We can’t let those greedy b*stards take everything!” His sight then quickly returned to the cocoon. In his eyes, they were honorable for waiting so long.

“Hong Xun has a point, the treasures in this labyrinth are limited, and we can’t let those loathsome people get everything!” Xue Yao said angrily, her beautiful eyes scanned across everyone present as she stood up.

The passage was right in front of them. It was quite a feat that everyone could stay seated and guard the cocoon for fifteen hours just because of honor despite the depth of the labyrinth tempting them!

The group of cultivators opened their eyes simultaneously as they heard what Hong Xun said, and they glanced at each other to see if anyone else had the same hesitant look in their eyes. Of course, they wanted to leave,

but their savior's fate was still uncertain; if they were to leave now, their conscience would surely haunt them.

“Bang!”

Just as everyone was pondering and wondering if they should leave, a deafening noise came from the blood cocoon as it started rattling vigorously.

“Boom! Boom! Boom!” The same banging noise could be heard from the cocoon. “Crack!” With a loud cracking sound fissures started to appear on its surface, and they quickly grow and covered the whole cocoon.

Just as everyone was staring at the cocoon, it cracked open, and they heard a sharp voice. “Thanks everyone for guarding me this long!” A handsome boy with a childish face slowly walked out with the iron talisman that suppressed the stone giant hanging on his waist.

“The boy survived the rage intent of the Blood Devourer crystals?! And he tamed the energy within them?” Seeing that Ye Wei had not lost his mind and that his presence was stronger than before, everyone was shocked and filled with joy.

Ye Wei was fine! They could finally continue the expedition with a clear conscience.

“Where is this boy from? He has so many tricks up his sleeves! Three medium-grade scrolls, and a talisman that could suppress the stone

giant..." People's eyes stopped on Ye Wei's belt where the talisman was hung, looked at it with admiration while praising its power.

'Just the three medium-grade scrolls would cost five hundred thousand silvers, and the talisman that suppressed the stone giant has got to be worth more than that! He is just a Student, yet he is carrying more than a million silver worth of goods on him!?' This thought lingered in everyone's minds. They were under the impression that Ye Wei had more valuable and powerful items in his possession as well.

Seeing that everyone was drooling over his talisman, Ye Wei felt slightly uneasy. He knew the talisman was a rare find, and it had unmeasurable value. Even though he was young, he knew that one should not put something valuable on display. Before Ye Wei stepped out of the cocoon he tried to put the talisman in his bag, but it just kept flying back out, so there was no other way!

With no other solutions, Ye Wei decided to hang the talisman on his belt. Although he did not feel safe, all the people outside the cocoon saw the talisman in action and knew he was not one to be messed with. Also, the ones that didn't see it defeat the stone giant would not really pay it any attention, so Ye Wei was relatively safe contrary to his fears.

Hong Xun glared at Ye Wei to check if he really was feeling well. Afterwards, he turned to the crowd and reported, "He is okay! We can relax now and enter the passage!"

"Yea!" Xue Yao nodded.

"Let's go!"

“We can’t let the treasures of this labyrinth fall into the hands of Lu Chao and his greedy followers!” Everyone was excited to get up and start moving. They had been waiting for this moment for fifteen hours.

“Let’s go!” The hundreds of cultivators entered the passage behind Hong Xun and Xue Yao.

Ye Wei was also following the crowd closely, feeling very touched and grateful. He could still not quite believe these people wasted their time in the labyrinth guarding him when they could have been hunting for treasures. Ye Wei was a cautious person, but he couldn’t help but taking a liking to the people who waited behind for him. He couldn’t fathom that strangers could be so honorable.

‘I don’t regret helping you guys at all! If I had the same choice again, I would fight for everyone!’ Ye Wei had been teased since he was a young boy because of his red Sentient, but he learned to trust people who gave him gratitude.

“This passage...” The moment they entered the passage, they were shocked. This passage was nothing like the two passages they had gone through before.

The first passage was a narrow tunnel with rune barriers and stone houses on each side. The second passage had nothing on its side walls, and it was no wider than fifteen meters. This passage, however, was over three hundred meters wide, and its walls were made of crystal. They were cool to the touch and glittered in the darkness. The surface was so smooth they could see their reflections!

“There are no signs of any fights here; we should be safe. Lu Chao and the rest entered this passage fifteen hours ago, so we have to speed up if we want to catch up with them!” Hong Xun frowned as he could not see an end to the crystal passageway, so he signaled for everyone to speed up.

“We have to hurry!”

“This passage is very long; I can’t even see the end of it!”

“Let’s hurry!”

Everyone nodded and started running at full speed as they empowered their body with Qi and stances.

“Ha!”

Seeing everyone accelerating, Ye Wei who was watching from behind started smiling reluctantly.

Everyone was a Warriors while Ye Wei was only a Student, and on top of that Ye Wei had not learned any mystic stances. Despite having his Sentient and dantian the size of a nine-star Student, he could not even closely match the Warriors’ speed by a long stretch.

Just as Ye Wei was getting discouraged, one of the flashes ahead turned back towards him. He saw a blur and smelled an appealing fragrance.

“Hey little boy, do you want me to carry you?” Xue Yao’s charming face wore a mischievous smile, looking kindly at Ye Wei.

“Huh?” Ye Wei was distracted by her refreshing scent, and after a second, he raised his head to see a youthful, slender figure.

“N-no... No thanks! I can just run at my own pace!” Ye Wei answered with a blush on his face.

“Ha ha ha! Little boy, are you scared of me? I am not a monster, I don’t bite!” Xue Yao was amused by how shy Ye Wei was, and she couldn’t help herself from laughing flirtatiously.

Xue Yao was a beautiful girl on top of being one of the four strongest youngsters Frozen Sun City had ever seen, both of these made her a popular person with countless admirers. It was rare for her to meet someone so shy and modest, and she couldn’t help herself not to play with him.

“Uum... You’re a girl, and I’m a boy... It’s not really appropriate for you to carry me...” Lin Zi Yan’s face suddenly appeared in Ye Wei’s mind as he spoke.

“What are you thinking about!?” Xue Yao tried to contain herself but couldn’t stop laughing over Ye Wei’s overreaction. She quickly drew a sequence of runes in the air and it turned into a stance in no time.

“Is that Shadow Breeze? The Spirit stance?” Ye Wei was surprised.

“You know your stances!” Xue Yao was impressed by Ye Wei’s knowledge.

A powerful breeze formed behind Ye Wei and Xue Yao. Suddenly, Ye Wei felt ashamed that he had misunderstood Xue Yao, but it was kind of expected because he didn’t have much experience talking with girls, especially ones as pretty as Xue Yao.

“Follow me, if we are too slow, we won’t get anything. You’ve used five hundred thousand silvers worth of scrolls if you leave here empty handed it will be unfortunate!” Xue Yao smiled as splashes of green light from the stance shone on her face. The breeze materialized, and turned into two clouds. The breeze carried Xue Yao and Ye Wei causing them to catch up with the rest of the group at an incredible speed.

“We are going so fast!” With the cold breeze on his face, Ye Wei’s clothes were blown around and flapped in the air; he felt exhilaration riding the Qi clouds.

‘I have to learn a speed enhancing stance like this, or maybe one like the Shadowshift stance!’ Ye Wei was lagging behind in speed compared to others, and he clenched his fists as his will to learn stances grew even stronger.

“Zoom! Zoom! Zoom!” Xue Yao was indeed powerful. Although she was carrying the both of them, they caught up with Hong Xun and the rest of the Warriors in minutes.

Everyone used stances to boost their speed, but despite the fact that they were running as fast as they could, the end of the crystal passage

could not be seen at all. They had been on the move for more than an hour which with the Warriors' speed enhancing stances meant they had already covered over forty kilometers.

The magnificence and sheer size of the labyrinth made them wonder how and why it was built. The creator certainly had something tremendous in mind while building such a complex structure with so many security measures and attention to detail...

Everyone ground their teeth and ran in the hopes that they could catch up with that greedy bunch of ungrateful people. It wasn't long before they finally saw light at the end of the passageway.

At the end of the crystal passage was a jade crystal wall covered with countless runes. It looked hazy from a distance and gave the cultivators the feeling that they were in a crystal empire. In front of the tall crystal wall stood Lu Chao and the people who had left the field earlier. They looked annoyed and displeased due to the wall blocking their path.

Although Lu Chao and his followers arrived at the end of the passage before Ye Wei's group caught up, they still couldn't find a way through after more than ten hours of struggling.

Through the transparent jade crystal wall everyone could clearly see levitating mystic scrolls, jade scripts, pills, and mystic arms! The treasures were so close but yet so far!

Lu Chao and his men were desperate. They have been staring at this fortune guarded by the wall for more than half a day. Their souls felt entranced, their eyes were bloodshot, and their aggressive faces spoke for

themselves.

“Oh, I remember you guys! Why are you all standing around? Were you waiting for us?” Somebody who was standing behind Hong Xun was amused by the swift karma and couldn’t help but mock them.

“A jade crystal wall?” Hong Xun glanced at Lu Chao with disdain and quickly shifted his focus to the wall behind him. When he saw what was on the other side of the wall, his pupils dilated.

Xue Yao let go of Ye Wei’s wrist and slowly walked towards the wall. Her playful face froze in shock as she saw what was behind the wall.

“What’s that!?” Everyone else who just arrived also started to notice what was behind the jade crystal wall.

Chapter 79 – Crazed Scramble

“Another rune barrier?!” Ye Wei said as he stood next to Xue Yao. He was also looking at the jade crystal wall, though his focus was not on the treasures, but on the runes that flowed within the wall.

Ye Wei’s soul sensibility was now as strong as a Runemaster’s after his remarkable dream a while ago, but upon reaching the seven-star Student stage it had improved even further. It only took him one glance to identify the wall as an advance rune barrier!

The runes that flowed slowly within the jade crystal wall were projected into Ye Wei’s eyes. Feeling fascinated, he just stood there as he observed and quickly learned the various changes and energy movements of this barrier. It was larger and a hundred times more complicated than the ones located in the other tunnels, and although Ye Wei’s soul sensibility had slightly matured, it was still impossible to make sense of the flow patterns within the barrier in such a short time.

“The boy is still alive?!” As Ye Wei stepped forward to get a better view of the barrier, Lu Chao and his followers’ eyes were stuck on the boy they were too greedy to care about. They found it hard to believe that he had survived. Lu Chao unconsciously clenched his fists, and although his life was saved by Ye Wei, he didn’t feel thankful at all.

He was aware of how aggressive the Qi in a Blood Devourer crystal was, not to mention Ye Wei was only a Student who had never faced his vicious inner demons before. Even Warriors couldn’t defend their minds against such a powerful energy contained within the crystals!

“How is this possible?!”

“Even if this boy had a way to deal with the mental pressure that the Blood Devourer crystals imposed, how can a Student’s body process the immense surge of dense primal energy!?” A perplexed look flashed across Lu Chao’s face. There was a glint of shock and disbelief in his eyes and also a trace of fear.

‘He is just a mere Student, and he not only used three medium-grade scrolls, but also had a way to deal with that aggressive Qi!?’ ‘Neither medium-grade scroll or Qi suppressing items were commonly found in a Student’s possession. It was apparent that this kid was no commoner!’

“Lu Chao, where are you hiding the treasures you found? I believe you promised to give half to this boy?” Xue Yao stood next to Ye Wei, and her cold gaze landed on Lu Chao as she inquired.

“Treasures?” Lu Chao’s face immediately straightened as he stared at the dazzling variety of treasures behind the jade crystal wall, and his eyes started twitching.

He had been standing in front of the jade wall for more than ten hours now. He had tried everything he could think of, used every stance he knew of, but failed to get through the barrier. All he could do now was stare at his treasures; it was not hard to imagine how frustrated he was.

He was already feeling reckless and now that Xue Yao mentioned treasure, Lu Chao felt so angry he could almost spit fire!

“The treasures are right here in front of you, feel free to help yourself to them!” Lu Chao knew Xue Yao was trying to spite him, and he coldly stared at her as he pointed to the jade crystal wall.

Lu Chao and hundreds of Warriors had tried and failed!

Looking at the stern-faced Lu Chao, both Hong Xun and Xue Yao were concerned, ‘He had half a day, but he could not get through the wall?’ Not only were they concerned about breaking through the barrier, but they were also tempted by the treasures behind it.

“Is there no way to get through?”

Everyone started looking to Hong Xun, the eight-star Warrior, who was the strongest among them. The fact that Lu Chao could not break the barrier open was not the end of the world.

“Breaking the jade crystal wall?” Hong Xun was not confident, but at this time he could only give it everything he had!

Everyone was focused on Hong Xun and nobody was paying attention to Ye Wei, who was standing still like a statue. Nobody would have ever imagined that he was actually analyzing the changes and the flow of these runes that none of them understood.

“Mystic stance – Golden Bell!”

Hong Xun aggressively took a step forward as a loud scream came out of his throat. Runes came from his fingers, and an immense bell

appeared.

“Break!” Hong Xun’s fist ferociously smashed towards the jade crystal wall, and the golden bell on his fist started spinning rapidly. Rays of golden light reflected from the wall as the bell’s sharp edges got closer and closer looking like a dazzling drill from the distance.

“Boooom!!”

The tremendous golden bell violently crashed into the barrier. The drill started spinning on the smooth surface creating a rippling pressure wave, and this caused the flowing runes on the wall to accelerate. Shortly after contact, an enormous recoil struck the golden bell.

“Crack!”

A million fractures spread across the golden bell, and the next moment with a thunderous sound it shattered. Hong Xun’s face turned ashen white, and he took seven steps backwards as blood slowly flowed down the corner of his mouth.

“Failure!”

“Hong Xun failed to break the jade crystal wall!”

“A few hundred Warriors together had been stopped by the barrier and the strongest Hong Xun failed as well. Who can breakthrough this jade crystal wall?”

The tunnel behind them was blocked, and in front of them was an impenetrable jade crystal wall blocking their path and the treasures.

“No! This is unfair, too unfair! Will we die here?”

“Break! Break! Break for me!” Seeing that Hong Xun had been knocked back, a lot of the Warriors became hopeless. They growled and charged towards the jade crystal wall, punching it in desperation.

“I stepped into Bloodmist Valley and experienced this many dangers only to obtain a low-grade mystic arm! Now I am trapped and will probably die here...” Hong Xun stared at the barrier as he wiped away the blood from the corner of his mouth. A self-deprecating smile was present on his modest face.

“Sigh...” Xue Yao who stood next to Ye Wei shook her head disappointedly, she needed to start thinking about alternative solutions.

While everyone was afraid, not knowing what else they could do, the runes were starting to make sense to Ye Wei. He twisted and cracked his stiff neck then his lips slightly curled up, forming a confident smile while staring at the jade crystal wall, he slowly walked up to it.

“Little bro?” Xue Yao who stood next to Ye Wei could see that he had started walking towards the wall, and she was confused. She grabbed his wrist to stop him, and there was a sense of worry in her clear eyes, “Hong Xun is an eight-star Warrior and even he got injured by this jade crystal wall, you shouldn’t try just let others figure it out!”

Xue Yao was afraid Ye Wei would get hurt.

“But there is no other choice. We’re stuck here anyway, and if I don’t at least give it a try I will never forgive myself for not contributing. Maybe... maybe I can break the jade crystal wall?” Ye Wei turned his head to look at the caring Xue Yao, he blinked and smile as he spoke.

“You think so?” Xue Yao said as she looked at Ye Wei’s confident smile. She was startled. This mysterious boy who stood in front of her was shrouded in secrets, and she couldn’t figure him out.

She then thought about how Ye Wei had used three medium-grade scrolls, and how this ordinary looking but powerful talisman had suppressed even the best quality Blood Devourer crystals so she decided to let him try and let go of his wrist.

“Look quickly! That boy is walking towards the jade crystal wall!”

“It’s that boy again, is he going to make a move?”

“He is fourteen at most but there are so many secrets hidden on him...”

“Maybe he, really can break the jade crystal wall!” Someone from the crowd said as everyone’s eyes focused on Ye Wei. Their depressed mood was lifted and now they were nervous and excited waiting to see what happened.

While everyone was spectating, Ye Wei walked up to the wall and slowly extended his hand, gently placing it on the barrier.

Ye Wei did not use any Qi, and therefore when he placed his hand on the barrier there was no recoil. Ye Wei slowly exhaled, and his eyebrows twitched slightly as strands of will-force leaked out of his palm and rushed into the jade crystal barrier in front of him

Ye Wei used his own will-force to move the runes in the jade crystal wall!

Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!

Controlled by Ye Wei's will-force the flow of runes inside the wall was slightly altered. There were more than ten thousand runes flowing within and with the strength of Ye Wei's will-force, he could not make any big alterations.

Ye Wei's hand rested on the wall with his eyes closed. Just like that he stood still. It looked like he was not doing anything, but in reality Ye Wei was doing everything he could forcing his will-force to change the flow of the runes.

Will-force was draining at a fearful speed, and Ye Wei's face was slowly turning white. Drops of sweat appeared on his forehead and the glittering drops ran down his face.

“Open!” After an hour, Ye Wei's closed eyes violently opened. He opened his mouth and grunted.

Boooooom!!

With Ye Wei's grunt, the huge jade crystal wall suddenly shook violently. At this moment everyone's eyes went wide with shock as if they saw something unbelievable.

While everyone was shocked, the jade crystal wall slowly opened to the left and right side. There was nothing but empty space between them and the superb collection of treasures!

Hum! Hum! Hum!

Everyone stared at the large amount of treasures that were as numerous as stars in the sky, and their eyes suddenly became bloodshot. Their breathing became heavy and the way they looked at the mountain of treasures was how a perverted old man looks at a naked women, lustfully, greedily, crazed!

Looking at the treasures in front of him, Lu Chao's eyes became blood red, he was shaking from ecstasy.

Hong Xun and Xue Yao both inhaled the cold air as their eyes became fiery.

Ye Wei, who opened the jade crystal wall, spotted something strange while looking at the mountain of treasures. He was confused and puzzled, unlike others there was no greed or crazed expression on his face!

“How can this be?” Ye Wei could not believe that his Runemaster’s level of soul sensibility was telling him that this collection of treasures was actually a hologram!

These holograms were too realistic, even Hong Xun, Xue Yao, and Lu Chao did not notice.

“Take ‘em!”

“Go, take everything!” After a brief moment of silence, everyone became crazy. Being in front of this much treasure even the most humble person wouldn’t be able to control their greed.

The scene became chaotic in a matter of seconds. People started fighting each other before they even went through the jade crystal wall.

Tsss! Tss!

“Careful!” In the chaos there were at least three to four swords that shot Qi towards Ye Wei. Seeing this, Xue Yao and Hong Xun’s faces straightened; they arrived in front on Ye Wei almost at the same time guarding him.

Now that the wall was opened, nobody could control themselves, and nobody could take control not even Xue Yao or Hong Xun. Everyone was just running around fighting, they didn’t even care who the other people were.

Unless it was an existence like Jin Yan or Mo Ya who had the power to crush everyone at once, nobody else could keep the crazy crowd's attention, let alone try to keep them under control.

“Everything is mine! All mine!” Nobody move!” In the chaos, Lu Chao used his strength to get himself to the front. Nobody knew when, but suddenly there were scrolls in his hands. They were low-grade scrolls, and there was a total of five.

“Rip!”

There was a grim smile on Lu Chao's face, and without hesitation he directly tore one of the scrolls.

Chapter 80 – Mirages

The moment the scroll was torn, hundreds of runes rained down, and the light it generated was blinding. The stance summoned a spectral bull in front of everyone.

This bull was ten meters tall, and its green skin had a metallic texture. It was surrounded by furious flames that came off it like stars shooting in the sky, an immense and fearsome pressure spread as the bull appeared.

Forbidden Spirit stance, Starry Bull!

“These treasures are all mine! don’t you dare move an inch!” There was a bloodthirsty smile on Lu Chao’s grim face. His crazed eyes stared at the swarm of Warriors.

“Kill!” With Lu Chao’s scream, the enormous bull howled and warmed up his muscular legs then charged mercilessly at the crowd.

“Roar!” The Starry Bull rushed out crashing into the crowd. It sent fifteen Warriors who stood at the front directly into the air. The Starry Bull’s fearsome power immediately shattered their bones to pieces, and some of the Warrior’s even had their organs torn apart.

“Lu Chao, I will haunt you!” Sorrowful cries echoed throughout the passageway.

The fifteen Warriors who took the impact were all on the floor, and

their bodies were paralyzed and shaking. Everyone could hear their horrifying cries as pieces of their organs were spit up as they coughed and tried to clear their airways. It was obvious they didn't have long to live!

With one charge the Starry Bull took more than ten lives!

Seeing this bloody scene, everyone was stunned and started shivering with fear. They widened their eyes, and their pupils dilated as if someone emptied a bucket of icy cold water over their heads. A cold sweat ran down their backs and within moments they were drenched in sweat.

Moments ago these fifteen Warriors were lively and collided with the rest of the crowd, but now they were lying on the ground lifelessly; this bone-chilling scene woke everyone up from their crazed state.

“Retreat!”

“Retreat, retreat!” There was horror in everyone’s eyes while they watched the rampaging Starry Bull. They turned around and retreated together; nobody dared to take one step forward.

“Lu Chao!”

“Have you lost your bloody mind?” The crowd backed off twenty meters to make sure they were not in the range of the Starry Bull. They stared angrily at the bloodthirsty Lu Chao who was standing behind the Bull.

“Forbidden Spirit stance!” Hong Xun and Xue Yao who were guarding

Ye Wei glared at the Starry Bull cautiously.

Nobody expected Lu Chao would have this kind of scrolls on him!

While everyone had been putting their lives on the line to fight the stone giants, Lu Chao did not make a move. Who would have thought he was hiding this kind of trump card?

Now that he had a chance to get his hands on the treasures he finally showed his true colors.

Although Lu Chao was controlling a forbidden level Spirit stance, he was looking at Ye Wei with fear in his eyes. He was ready to use all the other scrolls if Ye Wei joined the fight.

According to his plan, if he could stop Ye Wei, he would have a chance to get all these treasures. He could then use some of the weapons in this mountain of treasures to fight the crowd.

“Lu Chao, do you not plan on sharing?” Hong Xun’s face went black, his cold glare penetrated the semi-transparent bull and landed on Lu Chao.

“Lu Chao, there are a lot of treasures here, can you take them all? You will choke on them!” Xue Yao’s pretty face was ice cold, and her slender hands were clenched. She started to channel her Qi and was ready for a fight.

When they fought the stone puppets, Lu Chao was hiding in the back,

and now he turned against everyone when there were rare treasures to be obtained. He even dared to use a mystic scroll and kill fifteen Warriors; this kind of selfish, uncaring behavior enraged the crowd, everyone was fired up!

‘Idiot!’ Ye Wei shouted in his mind. His face was also ashened as he never thought the friendly man who had welcomed him could be so vicious.

‘All these scrolls, mystic arms, pills, rare metals, and herbs are all mirages, and you were stupid enough to enrage everyone and even kill for what’s not real. I would like to see how you get yourself out of this mess!’

“Well, Lu Chao even if you can collect all the treasures here, do you think you can get out of this labyrinth?” Hong Xun angrily shouted with a voice as clear as a church bell while he stared straight at Lu Chao.

“Lu Chao, you should think twice before making any more stupid decisions!”

“Are you really this selfish? Even Jin Yan and Mo Ya, strong as they are, had the courtesy to leave seven mystic arms for us to contest over. Who do you think you are?” Everyone’s cold gaze was pointed at Lu Chao through the fading Starry Bull.

“I, Lu Chao, do whatever I want, and you have no grounds to boss me around! If you think you can stop me then step forward. If you don’t have the guts to actually do something about it, shut up!” Lu Chao held the four shiny scrolls tight and sneered at the crowd as he shouted disdainfully.

“You!” Everyone angrily pointed their fingers at Lu Chao as their bodies shivered in anger, but although they were extremely crossed, nobody dared to move an inch.

Medium-grade scrolls contained Myst stances; that was a known fact. There was a medium-grade scroll in Lu Chao’s hand, and the fifteen bodies on the floor was a horrifying example of how they might end up if they decided to fight Lu Chao. Even though they were angry, nobody wanted to end up losing their lives so horribly.

The treasures were alluring, but they won’t be able to enjoy any wealth or power if they were dead!

Although everyone was aware that the forbidden stance Lu Chao was in control of could only kill thirty of them at most before its power faded and that if they were to attack together, they would be able to take him down, nobody was willing to take that risk it. Especially when Lu Chao had four more scrolls in his hand.

“You!” Xue Yao’s knuckles were cracking from her fury, feeling furious and driven by her impulses, she started drawing a rune sequence in the air., She was ready to attack in despite the odds being stacked up against her.

Right as Xue Yao was about to launch herself towards Lu Chao, Ye Wei raised his arm and blocked her way.

“If he likes the treasure so much, we should just let him take all he wants!” Ye Wei casually glared at Lu Chao with a sarcastic smile on his

face.

“Huh?” Xue Yao held her step, and she looked at Ye Wei confused. Ye Wei had used three medium-grade scrolls in total just to defeat the puppets, how could he be so calm? Isn’t he mad about possibilities of returning empty handed?

If Lu Chao gets ahold of the treasure, he will become even stronger and harder to deal with.

“Just leave him be. Just because you can see something doesn’t mean that it exists!” Ye Wei whispered to Xue Yao, who just looked even more confused after his explanation.

‘Doesn’t exist?’ Xue Yao’s clear eyes widened as she pointed at the levitating treasures and looked back at the indifferent Ye Wei. She hesitated and then stepped back to where Ye Wei stood.

“Ha! That’s what I’m talking about!” Lu Chao said dwelling in complacency he stared at the crowd and turned around to look at the mountain of treasures that waited for him. He licked his lips and couldn’t take his greedy eyes off what was his.

“It’s mine. It’s all mine! Hahaha!” Lu Chao laughed in his mind. He knew nobody here would be a threat if he was to use the scrolls he had been hiding from everyone’s sight this whole time!

When Lu Chao obtained these treasures, his strength would increase tenfold; he would be safe inside the labyrinth. When he stepped back

into the outside world, he would be in even safer hands, his granddad. A condensed prime Warrior, who went by the name Lu Zhong Tian, was waiting for him to return.

Lu Zhong Tian was a four-star condensed prime Warrior, and being protected by granddad, even Jin Yan and Mo Ya would not be able to stop Lu Chao.

Lu Chao felt no fear as he enthusiastically looked a mystic arm close to himself. With a proud smile on his face, he reached out for the levitating axe.

The moment he extended his arm his proud smile disappeared and the fire in his eyes vanished only to be replaced by shock.

“How can this be?!” Lu Chao was startled by how his hand went right through the axe. He felt humiliated and screamed in disbelief.

A mirage!

The mystic arm was a mirage?

“No! No, No way, No way!” Lu Chao had wasted the Starry Bull scroll he treasured for years. He had offended and terrorized everyone, including Hong Xun and Xue Yao, who were his friends. Never did he imagine that everything was a mirage. He could not accept this ending, and he would not accept it.

Lu Chao started acting even crazier. He leaped around and tried to

snatch all the scrolls, pills, and weapons in the air only to find out that they were all fakes.

Mirage, mirages, they are all mirages!

Everyone was at first shocked, and moments after gloating smiles appeared on their faces. Words could not describe the joy in their hearts. If the treasures were real and they fell into Lu Chao's hands, the consequences would be disastrous!

In the end, Lu Chao got nothing but humiliation.

Even Hong Xun, who had an extremely dry sense of humor was wearing a sneer on his otherwise serious face. He enjoyed himself while watching Lu Chao frantic behavior.

“Little bro, how... how did you know that they were not real?” Xue Yao widened her adorable puppy eyes and asked Ye Wei in a surprised tone. She really couldn't tell that the treasures were mirages before Lu Chao tried to grab them. They looked too realistic!

Her gorgeous eyes stared at Ye Wei, and she started to replay the scenes when Ye Wei defeated the stone giant. How he survived the blood cocoon without a scratch. She was getting increasingly curious about Ye Wei's background and wanted explanations.

“About that... I will tell you later. We should get our hands on the real treasure for now; it is right in front of us!” Ye Wei smiled, and as he said that there was a golden flash in his eyes. He then looked beyond Lu Chao

onto the four crystal pillars at the back of the chamber.

“Follow me, and keep your eyes on Lu Chao’s scrolls!” Ye Wei could not be bothered to explain everything at once as he whispered to Xue Yao and Hong Xun while leading them towards the back of the chamber.

“The real treasure?” Hong Xun, Xue Yao’s eyes brightened. They looked at each other and then turned their focus onto the four pillars Ye Wei was talking about.